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U O F R

THE PRISONERS.

Hans of Iceland, Frontispiece.

HANS OF ICELAND.

Private copy
BY VICTOR HUGO.

BOSTON:
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY.
1894.

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UNIVERSITY PRESS:
JOHN WILSON AND SON, CAMBRIDGE, U.S.A.

HANS OF ICELAND.

LIBRARY EDITION.

The Romances of
VICTOR HUGO.

LES MISÉRABLES 5 vols.
NOTRE DAME 2 vols.
TOILERS OF THE SEA 2 vols.
THE MAN WHO LAUGHS 2 vols.
NINETY-THREE 1 vol.
HANS OF ICELAND 1 vol.
BUG-JARGAL, CLAUDE GUEUX, and
LAST DAY OF A CONDEMNED 1 vol.

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION.

1833.

“Hans of Iceland” is the work of a young man, and of a very young man at that.

One feels on reading “Hans of Iceland” that the boy who wrote it, in a fit of desperation in 1821, had no previous experience of affairs, no previous experience of men, no previous experience of ideas, and that he was seeking to guess all that he did not know.

Three ingredients enter into every work of the imagination, be it drama, poem, or novel: what the author has felt, what he has observed, what he has surmised.

A novel, particularly, in order that it may deserve success, must contain an abundance of the author's feelings, observations, and surmises; and the surmises must follow, simply, logically, and without solution of continuity, from the observations and feelings.

Upon the application of this law to “Hans of Iceland” it will be easy to put one's finger upon the glaring fault of the book.

There is in “Hans of Iceland” but one of the author's feelings, the young man's love, — but one thing drawn

from his observation, the young girl's love. All the rest is surmised, that is to say invented. For youth, which has neither deeds, nor experience, nor examples to fall back upon, has only the imagination to assist in forming surmises. And so "Hans of Iceland," assuming that it is worthy to be classed at all, is little more than a romance of the imagination.

When the first gush of enthusiasm has spent itself, when the brow begins to knit, when one feels the need of writing something better than strange tales to frighten old women and little children, when contact with the world has worn off the rough edges of youth, one realizes that every invention, every creation, every fancy of the artist should be founded upon study, observation, contemplation, knowledge of perspective, comparison, serious meditation, constant, studious delineation of every object according to nature, and conscientious criticism of himself; and the inspiration which is evolved from these new conditions, far from losing anything of its force, finds its horizon greatly enlarged and its wings strengthened. The poet then has full knowledge of where he stands. All the visionary dreaming of his early years becomes in some sort crystallized into serious thought. The second period of life is ordinarily that in which the artist produces his greatest works. He is still young, and already mature. It is the priceless moment, the crowning medial point, the warm,

brilliant noon-tide, the one instant when there is the least possible shadow and the brightest possible light.

There have been incomparable artists who have remained at that supreme height all their lives, despite their declining years. Such men are the transcendental geniuses in the world's history. Shakespeare and Michel-Angelo left the mark of youth upon some of their works, but not one of them bears any indication of old age.

To return to the novel of which a new edition is about to appear, — this book, such as it is, with its jerky, gasping action, its inelastic characters, its clumsy diction, its pretentious but ill-conceived plot, its unblushing lapses into mere dreaming, its inartistic jumbling together of colors without regard for the eye, its crude, uneven, and offensive style, indiscriminating and inelegant, and with the thousand and one offences against good taste which it commits, quite unknowingly, in its course, — this book accurately represents the time of life at which it was written, and the condition of the mind, the imagination, and the heart in early youth, when one is in love with one's first love, when one magnifies the commonplace disappointments of life into insuperable, poetic obstructions, when one's head is filled with heroic fantasies which make one great in one's own eyes, when one is a man in two or three respects, and a

.

mere child in twenty others, when one has read Ducray-Duminil at eleven years, Auguste Lafontaine at thirteen, Shakespeare at sixteen, — a curious intellectual ladder, which carries one in rapid succession from the absurd to the sentimental, and from the sentimental to the sublime.

For the simple reason that, in our opinion, this book, which is ingenuous before everything, represents with some fidelity the time of life at which it was produced, we present it once more to the public in 1833, just as it was written in 1821.

Furthermore, since the author, unimportant as is the place he holds in literature, has undergone the fate common to all writers, great and small, of seeing his early works belauded at the expense of his later ones, and of hearing it said that he is a long way from having realized the moderate anticipations founded upon his first efforts, he deems it to be his duty, without venturing to put forward arguments which might lose their force in his mouth against a criticism which is perhaps judicious and well-grounded, to reprint those first efforts exactly as they were written. In that way each reader will be able to judge for himself whether the steps which separate "Hans of Iceland" from "Notre Dame de Paris" are steps forward or backward.

PARIS, May, 1833.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE author of this work, from the day when he wrote the first page to the day when he was able to write the blessed words *The End* at the foot of the last, was the plaything of a most absurd delusion. Having come to the conclusion that a work in four volumes was worthy of being carefully thought out, he wasted his time seeking a fundamental idea, and developing it well or ill into a plot which might or might not have some merit ; in arranging the scenes, to make them as effective as possible ; and in studying the manners and morals of the period as best he might : in a word, he took his work seriously.

It was not until this moment, when, in accordance with the custom of authors to end where the reader is supposed to begin, he sat down to work out a long preface, which should be a sort of buckler for the child of his imagination, and should contain, in conjunction with a statement of the moral and literary principles which underlay its conception, a more or less cursory sketch of the historical events to which

it refers, and a picture, more or less complete, of the country where the action occurs, — it was not until this moment, we say, that he detected his mistake, that he realized the utter insignificance and triviality of the subject on which he had gravely soiled so much paper, and that he felt how he had, so to speak, thrown dust in his own eyes by persuading himself that this tale might, up to a certain point, be considered a literary production, and that the four volumes really formed a book.

He has therefore wisely determined, after making due apology, to say nothing at all in this preface, which his friend the publisher will consequently have to print in very large letters. He will not let the reader into the secret of his surname or baptismal names, nor whether he is young or old, married or single, nor whether he has heretofore written elegies or fables, odes or satires, nor whether he designs hereafter to write tragedies, melodramas, or comedies, nor whether he is posing as a literary patrician, as a member of some academy, nor whether he has a desk in the office of some newspaper, — all of which, however, would be interesting things to know. He will content himself with these few simple remarks : that the picturesque portion of his tale has received especial attention ; that K and Y and H and W will be frequently met with there, although he has never made use of those romantic characters save

with great discretion, — witness the historic name of *Guldenlew*, which several chroniclers write *Guldenloëve*, a form which he dared not adopt ; that there will also be found numerous diphthongs, changed about with much taste and elegance ; and, lastly, that each chapter is preceded by a mysterious epigraph which adds greatly to the interest, and tends to give more character to each division of the composition.

JANUARY, 1823.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE author of this work has been informed that it is absolutely necessary that he should furnish a few lines by way of advertisement, preface, or introduction to this second edition. In vain did he dilate upon the fact that the four or five unlucky inane pages which led the way in the first edition, and with which the publisher insists upon disfiguring this, have already drawn down the anathemas of one of our most honorable and illustrious critics,¹ who accused him of adopting the *bitter-sweet tone* of the renowned Jedediah Cleishbotham, schoolmaster and sexton of the parish of Gandercleugh ; in vain did he declare that this brilliant and judicious critic, stern as he was in rebuking the original sin, would be absolutely pitiless should it be repeated ; and equally in vain did he bring forward a host of other reasons no less convincing, to avoid falling into the trap ; it would seem that they must have been met by even better ones on the other side, for here he is now

¹ M. Charles Nodier, in the *Quotidienne* of March 12.

writing a second preface, after having so bitterly repented writing the first. As he took up his pen to carry out this bold determination, his first impulse was to place at the head of this second edition something with which he did not dare to burden the first, to wit, *some general and special views upon the art of novel writing*. He was meditating deeply upon this little literary and didactic treatise, and was still in the mystic intoxication of composition, a very brief instant, when the author, thinking to attain an ideal perfection which he will never attain, is hugging himself ecstatically over what he is going to write, — he was, we say, in that state of blissful self-content in which work is a pleasure, and the secret-consciousness of the divine afflatus seems even sweeter than the noisy pursuit of fame, when one of his most judicious friends rudely aroused him from his self-satisfaction, from his ecstasy, from his intoxication, by assuring him that several very famous, very popular, and very influential men of letters considered that the dissertation he was preparing would be very absurd and tiresome, and in the worst possible taste; that the functions of apostles of criticism which they had undertaken to perform in divers public sheets, imposed upon them the painful duty of pitilessly hunting down the monster of *romanticism*, and every variety of bad taste, and that they were engaged at that very moment in preparing for certain impartial

and enlightened journals a conscientious, well-reasoned and extremely piquant criticism of the still unwritten dissertation. At this appalling intelligence, the author —

“*Obstupuit; steteruntque comæ; et vox faucibus hæsit.*”¹

that is to say that he could see no other possible course than to leave in the limbo whence he was preparing to bring it forth that most excellent treatise (“a virgin still unborn,” as Jean-Baptiste Rousseau has it) which was to be reproved in advance by so judicious and harsh a criticism. His friend advised him to replace it simply by a sort of “publishers’ preface,” in which he could very properly make those gentlemen say all the pleasant things which tickle an author’s ear. He even furnished him with several specimens culled from divers works which are in high favor. Some begin with these words: —

“The extraordinary popular success of this work,” etc.

Others with these: —

“The European celebrity which this novel has acquired,” etc.; or: —

“It is mere supererogation now to praise this work, since it is the universal verdict that any possible praise falls far short of its merit,” etc.

¹ Was dumfounded; his hair stood on end; and his voice stuck in his throat.

Although these various formulæ, as his judicious adviser called them, were somewhat tempting, the author did not feel sufficient humility or paternal indifference to expose his work to the unreasonable demands and probable disenchantment of the reader who should have seen these magniloquent apologies, nor sufficient effrontery to imitate the showmen at public fairs, who exhibit, as a fillip to the curiosity of the public, a huge crocodile painted on a canvas, behind which, after you have paid your money, you find there is nothing but a lizard. He therefore discarded all thought of sounding his own praises through the obliging mouths of his publishers. His friend then suggested to him to put in the mouth of his Icelandic villain some sentiments which would make him fashionable, and put him in sympathy with the present age, — such, for instance, as sly and cutting witticisms against marchionesses, bitter sarcasms against the priests, or ingenious innuendoes against nuns, capuchins, and other monsters of the social régime. The author would have liked nothing better; but, to tell the truth, it did not seem to him that there was any very close connection between marchionesses and capuchins and the work he is putting forth. He might, indeed, have borrowed some other colors from the same palette, and have thrown together here a few pages, running over with philanthropy, wherein — giving a wide berth all the

while to a certain dangerous reef which lies just beneath the surface of the sea of philosophy, and is known as the *Correctional Tribunal*—he could have put forward some of the truths discovered by our wise men for the glory of mankind, and the consolation of the dying; to wit, that man is only a brute, that the soul is only a bit of gas of varying density, and that God is nothing at all. But he reflected that these incontrovertible truths were already very trite and worn, and that he would add scarcely a drop of water to the deluge of moral apothegms, atheistical scruples, maxims, doctrines, and principles which have been poured out upon us for our good, these thirty years past, in such prodigious quantity that one might, were it not for the irreverence, apply to them Régnier's lines upon a shower:—

“Des nuages en eau tomboit un tel dégoust,
Que les chiens altérés pouvoient boire debout.”¹

However, these lofty subjects have no very evident relation to the work in hand, and the author would have been much embarrassed to find a way to lead up to them, although the art of transition has been greatly simplified since so many great men have learned the secret of passing without winking from a hovel to a palace, and of exchanging, without noticing the incongruity, the foraging cap for the civic crown.

¹ The water poured down so from the clouds that the thirsty dogs could drink standing erect.

Realizing, therefore, that neither his talent nor his knowledge — *neither his wings nor his beak*, as the ingenious Arab poet sings — will furnish him with an interesting preface for his readers, the author decided to offer simply a serious, frank statement of the improvements made in this second edition.

In the first place, he takes the liberty of observing that the phrase *second edition*, is not at all appropriate, and that the title of *first edition* really belongs to this republication, because the four rough bundles of grayish paper covered with black and white spots, which the indulgent public has hitherto been content to look upon as the four volumes of “Hans of Iceland,” were so disfigured by typographical absurdities — the work of an uncivilized printer — that the wretched author, as he cast his eye over his unrecognizable production, suffered constantly the agony that a father might feel, to receive back his beloved child, mutilated and tattooed by the Iroquois of Lake Ontario.

In that unlucky venture the *esclavage* (slavery) of suicide, replaced the *usage* (custom) of suicide ; furthermore, the typographical bungler gave to a *lien* the voice which belonged to a *lion* ; in another place he took away its *pics* (summit) from the mountain of Dofre-Fjeld, and ascribed to it the possession of *pieds* (feet) ; and when the Norwegian fishermen

were expecting to come to anchor in the *criques* (inlets), he forced them into *briques* (bricks). Rather than weary the reader, the author passes over in silence innumerable other outrages of this description which his resentful memory recalls : —

“Manet alto in pectore vulnus.”¹

Suffice it to say that there is no absurd, incomprehensible thought, no grotesque, hieroglyphic figure which this riddle-making printer did not make him express. Alas ! whoever has had the misfortune to print a dozen lines in his life, though it were no more than a marriage or death certificate, will appreciate the bitterness of the pang.

The proofs of this new impression have been read and reread with the most painstaking care, and now the author, in common with one or two of his close friends, ventures to believe that this restored novel is worthy to figure among those brilliant writings in the presence of which *the eleven stars bow down as before the moon and the sun.*²

If Messieurs the newspaper men accuse him of not having made the proper corrections, he will take the liberty of sending them the proofs of the regenerated works, blackened by the careful revision to which they have been subjected ; for it is said that there is more than one “doubting Thomas” among these gentlemen.

¹ The wound remains deep in the breast.

² Alcoran.

The indulgent reader will observe, further, that several dates have been rectified, some few historical notes added, and that one or two chapters have been embellished with new epigraphs; in a word, he will find on every page changes whose importance is proportioned to the importance of the work itself.

An impertinent, though friendly adviser, desired the author to place in footnotes translations of all the Latin phrases scattered through these pages by Spiagudry,—for the benefit (added this person) of the masons and boiler-makers and hair-dressers who conduct certain journals wherein “Hans of Iceland” might possibly be taken up for judgment. Imagine how indignantly the author received this disingenuous advice. He instantly begged the wretched joker to understand that all newspaper men, without distinction, are perfect sons of urbanity, knowledge, and good faith, and not to insult him by imagining that he was one of those ungrateful citizens, always ready to apply to the arbiters of taste and genius the malicious verse of an old poet:—

“Tenez-vous dans vos peaux, et ne jugez personne.”¹

He averred that, for his own part, he was very far from thinking that the *lion's skin* was not the skin which really belonged to these popular worthies.

¹ Keep to your shells, and criticise nobody.

Again, some one exhorted him — he feels that he owes it to his readers to tell them everything without concealment — to place his name beneath the title of this romance; which has hitherto been the abandoned child of an unknown father. It must be owned that, over and above the pleasure of seeing the seven or eight Roman characters which go to make up what is called his name, standing out in fine black letters on fine white paper, there is a certain charm in the thought of having it glitter by itself on the back of the printed cover, as if the work which that cover encloses, far from being the sole monument of the author's genius, were but one of the pillars of the imposing temple which is some day to be raised to his immortal renown, — but a paltry specimen of his hidden talent and his unpublished glory. This proves, at the very least, that one proposes at some future day to be an illustrious and prolific writer. To triumph over this new temptation required all the author's dread of his inability to make his way through the crowd of blackeners of paper, who, although they cease to write anonymously, always remain *unknown*.

As to the suggestions which have been submitted to him by several *amateurs* with delicate ears, touching the barbarous harshness of the Norwegian names, he considers them extremely apt; and so he proposes, as soon as he shall be chosen a member of

the Royal Society of Stockholm, or of the Academy of Bergen, to request Messieurs the Norwegians to change their language, considering that the villanous jargon which they are whimsical enough to use wounds the tympana of our Parisian ladies, and that their outlandish names, which are as rugged as their cliffs, produce upon the sensitive tongue which pronounces them the same effect which their bear's-oil and bark bread would undoubtedly produce upon the sensitive nerve-centres of our palates.

It remains for him to thank the eight or ten persons who have been kind enough to read his work throughout, — its prodigious success proves that that number must have done so; he also extends his heartfelt gratitude to those of his fair readers of the gentler sex, who, as he is assured, have tried to form from the book an ideal of the author of “Hans of Iceland.” He is infinitely flattered to learn that they give him red hair, a curly beard, and haggard eyes; he is embarrassed that they deign to do him the honor to believe that he never cuts his nails; but he begs them on his knees to be convinced that he does not carry his ferocity so far as to devour little children alive; however, all these points will be settled when his fame shall have risen to the level of that of the authors of “Lolotte et Fan-fan,” or “Monsieur Botte,” those transcendent intellects, twin brothers in genius and taste, *Arcades ambo*,

and when at the beginning of each of his works his portrait shall be placed, *terribiles visu formæ*, with a sketch of his life, *domestica facta*.

He was about to bring this too long note to a close, when his bookseller, just as the work was to be sent to the newspapers, came to him and asked him to write for them a few complimentary words concerning his own book, adding, to dissipate the author's scruples, that "his handwriting would not betray him, for he would copy them himself." This last touch seemed to him very affecting. As it would seem that in this enlightened age every one considers it his duty to inform his neighbor as to his personal qualities and perfections (a subject on which nobody is so well posted as their proprietor); and, furthermore, as this last temptation is somewhat hard to resist, and as he may succumb to it, the author thinks it his duty to warn the public that they must never believe half of what the newspapers say of his work.

APRIL, 1823.

ILLUSTRATIONS.



From Drawings by A. Demarest.

THE PRISONERS *Frontispiece*

THE MARRIAGE *Page 468*

HANS OF ICELAND.

I.

Did you see it ? did you see it ? did you see it ? Oh ! did you see it ? Who saw it ? Who did see it ? For mercy's sake, who saw it ? — STERNE : *Tristram Shandy*.

“LOOK ye what love leads to, neighbor Niels : poor Guth Stersen would n't be stretched out on that great black stone yonder, like a star-fish forgotten by the tide, if she had never thought of anything but patching up the old boat and mending nets for her father, our old comrade. St. Usuph, the fisherman, comfort him in his affliction !”

“And her lover,” chimed in a shrill quavering voice, “Gill Stadt, that fine young fellow lying there beside her, would n't be where he is if he had passed his youth rocking his little brother's cradle under the smoky rafters of his cabin, instead of making love to Guth, and seeking his fortune in those cursed mines of Røeraas.”

Neighbor Niels, whom the first speaker addressed, interrupted at this point : —

“Your memory keeps pace with your years, and is growing old with you, Mother Olly. Gill never had

a brother, and that makes poor widow Stadt's grief all the more bitter, for her cabin is quite deserted now. If she tries to look up to heaven for comfort, she will find her old roof in the way, where her baby's empty cradle still hangs, — her baby, who grew to manhood, and now is dead."

"Poor mother!" rejoined old Olly; "for the young man has nobody to blame but himself; why did he go to the mines at Røeraas?"

"I really believe," said Niels, "that those infernal mines rob us of a man for every copper farthing they yield. What do you think, neighbor Braal?"

"Miners are fools!" replied the fisherman. "If a fish would live he must not leave the water; no more must a man go into the bowels of the earth."

"But suppose Gill Stadt had to go to work in the mines in order to win his bride?" asked a young man in the crowd.

"He should n't have risked his life," interposed Olly, "for a mere sentiment which is n't worth it, and will never make up for its loss. A fine marriage bed Gill has provided for his Guth!"

"Pray, did the young woman drown herself in despair at the death of the young man?" queried another bystander.

"Who says she did?" shouted a soldier, pushing his way to the front. "This girl — I knew her well — was betrothed to a young miner who was recently crushed by a blast in the underground galleries of Storwaadsgrube, near Røeraas: but she was also the mistress of one of my comrades, and day before yesterday she undertook to get into Munckholm secretly

to celebrate the death of her betrothed with her lover; the boat she was on was wrecked on a reef, and she was drowned."

A confused murmur of voices greeted this speech.

"Impossible, master soldier," cried the old women; the younger ones held their peace, and neighbor Niels maliciously reminded Braal, the fisherman, of his solemn sentence:

"Look ye, what love leads to!"

The warrior was on the point of losing his temper in good earnest with his female contradictors; he had already called them "old witches from Quiragoth Cave," and they were little disposed to submit patiently to so bitter an insult, when the discussion was suddenly brought to an end by a sharp, commanding voice, crying, "Peace, peace, ye drivellers!" Every tongue was hushed, as when the sudden crowing of a cock imposes silence on the clucking of the hens.

Before describing the remainder of the scene, it may not be amiss to describe the spot where it took place. It was, as the reader doubtless has guessed ere this, one of those dismal structures which public compassion and social foresight consecrate to the reception of unidentified bodies; the last abiding-place of a certain class of deceased persons, most of whom have lived unhappy lives; a place to which resort the indifferent sight-seer, the morbid or philanthropic observer, and frequently, weeping kinsfolk and friends, whose long and unendurable anxiety has left them but the one sad hope. At the period, already long past, and in the partially civilized

country, to which I have taken my reader, no one had as yet dreamed, as in our cities of luxury and filth, of making these temporary resting-places the ornate and ingeniously gloomy structures we see to-day. There was no tomb-like opening, through which the sun's rays entered obliquely, lighting up arches artistically carved, and resting upon a row of stone beds, with pillows fashioned at the head, as if with the purpose to provide the dead with some of the conveniences of life. And if, by chance, the keeper's door stood ajar, the eye, wearied by gazing at the naked, hideous bodies, had not, as it may have to-day, the welcome relief of cheerful rooms and happy children. No ; there death was displayed in all its ugliness, in all its horror ; and there had been as yet no attempt to deck it out with finery and ribbons.

The apartment in which our friends were standing was large and dark, the darkness making it appear larger than it really was ; it received light through the low square door which opened upon the quay of Drontheim, and through an irregular opening in the roof, through which a pale, sickly light came in with the rain or hail or snow, as the case might be, upon the bodies which lay directly beneath it. The room was divided across the middle by an iron railing waist high. The public were admitted into the outer section through the square door ; on the other side of the rail were six long slabs of black granite, arranged side by side. A small side door in each section was used by the keeper and his assistant, whose living apartments were in the rear, extending

back to the sea. The miner and his betrothed were lying upon two of these granite couches. Decomposition had already begun in the young woman's body, and was evidenced by the broad blue and purple streaks which marked the location of the blood vessels in her arms and legs. Gill's features seemed harsh and forbidding; but his body was so horribly mutilated that it was impossible to say whether he was really as handsome as Mother Olly said.

The conversation which we have faithfully recounted took place among the awe-struck crowd, who were standing in front of the disfigured remains.

A tall, spare old man, who was sitting with folded arms and bent head upon a dilapidated stool in the darkest corner of the room, seemed to be utterly unmindful of what was said, until he suddenly rose to his feet, crying: "Peace, peace, drivellers!" and seized the soldier's arm.

Every voice was hushed; the soldier turned around, and burst into a great roar of laughter at the extraordinary aspect of the speaker, whose haggard face, sparse, unkempt hair, long, bony fingers, and complete outfit of reindeer-skin fully justified his boisterous greeting. But the women, who were struck dumb for a moment, soon began to grumble:

"It's the keeper of the Spladgest!¹ It's that infernal dead man's porter. It's that devil Spiagudry, the cursed wizard!"

"Peace, drivellers, peace! If this is your witches' Sabbath, go quick and look out for your brooms, or

¹ The name given to the morgue at Drontheim.

- they'll fly away all alone. Leave this worthy descendant of the god Thor in peace."

Thereupon Spiagudry, forcing his features to assume an amiable grin, addressed the soldier: —

"You were saying, my good fellow, that this wretched woman —"

"The old rascal!" muttered Olly; "yes, we are 'wretched women' in his eyes, because our bodies, if they fall into his clutches, bring him in only thirty ascalins each, while he receives forty for the carcass of a good-for-nothing man."

"Silence, old hags!" exclaimed Spiagudry. "Upon my soul, these daughters of the devil are like their kettles; when they are warm they can't help sputtering. Tell me, my gallant king of the sword, doubtless your comrade, whose mistress this Guth was, proposes to kill himself, in despair at having lost her?"

At that the long-delayed explosion broke forth. "Do you hear the miscreant, the old heathen?" cried twenty shrill discordant voices; "he would like to know that there is one man less among the living, just because of the forty ascalins a death will bring him in."

"Suppose that's true," rejoined the keeper of the Spladgest, "has not our gracious lord the king, Christian V., whom St. Hospitius bless, declared himself to be the born guardian of all miners, so that when they die he can enrich the royal treasury with their paltry savings?"

"You do the king great honor," retorted the fisherman Braal, "to compare the royal treasury to the

strong-box of this charnel-house of yours, and him to yourself, neighbor Spiagudry."

"Neighbor!" ejaculated the keeper, annoyed at such familiarity: "your neighbor! Say, your host rather, for it may very well be, my dear toiler of the sea, that some day I shall loan you one of my six stone beds for a week or so. However," he added with a laugh, "I spoke of this soldier's possible death, simply from a desire to see the practice of committing suicide kept up in connection with the tragic passions these ladies are wont to inspire."

"Well, well, you lanky corpse in charge of corpses!" said the soldier, "tell me, pray, what you are driving at, with that amiable grin, which resembles nothing so much as a hanged man's last smile."

"Very good, very good, my popinjay," rejoined Spiagudry, "I always thought there was more real wit under the helmet of Private Thurn, who whips the devil with sword and tongue, than under the mitre of Bishop Isleif, who wrote the History of Iceland, or the square cap of Professor Shoëning, who described our cathedral."

"In that case, if you take my advice, my old bag of leather, you will abandon your charnel-house income, and sell yourself to the viceroy at Bergen for his cabinet of curiosities. I swear by St. Belphegor that he pays their weight in gold for rare species of animals. But tell me, what do you want of me?"

"When the bodies which are brought to us are found in the water, we are obliged to turn over half

of our fees to the fishermen. I simply wanted to beg you therefore, O illustrious descendant of Private Thurn, to induce your unhappy comrade not to drown himself, but to select some other variety of death. It ought not to make any difference to him, and he would not care to wrong the poor Christian who will entertain his dead body, assuming, that is, that the loss of Guth will drive him to commit this deed of desperation."

"You are very much mistaken, my kindly and hospitable keeper: my comrade will not have the gratification of becoming a guest of your inviting inn with six beds. Do you fancy he has not already consoled himself with another valkyrie for the death of this one? By my beard! he was tired of your Guth long ago."

At these words the tempest, which Spiagudry had deflected for a moment to his own head, broke more fiercely than ever upon the ill-starred man of war.

"What, you miserable villain," shrieked the old women; "that's the way you forget us, is it? Bah! who would love such carrion!"

The younger women still held their peace; some of them, truth to tell, could not avoid the thought that this black sheep was not by any means an unattractive youth.

"Oho!" said he, "is this the Witches' Sabbath over again? Beelzebub's punishment is a fearful one indeed, if he has to listen to such choruses as this once a week."

Nobody knows what would have been the result of this latest squall, if general attention had not been

altogether engrossed at that moment by a noise without. It grew louder as it approached, and soon a swarm of half-naked boys, running along beside a covered litter carried by two men, rushed shouting into the Spladgest.

"Where does that come from?" the keeper asked the bearers.

"From the beach at Urchtal."

"Oglypiglap!" shouted Spiagudry.

One of the doors at the side opened, and a little Laplander, dressed in a suit of leather, appeared and signed to the bearers to follow him. Spiagudry went with them, and the door closed upon them before the inquisitive multitude had time to guess from the length of the body on the litter whether it was a man or a woman.

This subject was still furnishing food for conjecture, when Spiagudry and his assistant reappeared in the inner section of the room, carrying the body of a man, which they laid on one of the granite beds.

"It's a long time since I handled such beautiful clothes," said Oglypiglap. As he spoke he stood on tiptoe and hung a captain's handsome uniform over the dead man's head.

The head was disfigured, and the rest of the body covered with blood; the keeper washed it several times with water from an old leaky pail.

"By St. Beelzebub!" exclaimed the soldier, "it's an officer of my regiment! Let me see: can it be Captain Bollar, dead of grief for his uncle's death? Bah! he's his heir. Baron Randmer? he staked his estate at cards yesterday, but to-morrow he will win

it back, and his opponent's castle to boot. Can it be Captain Lory, whose dog was drowned? or Treasurer Stunck, whose wife is unfaithful to him? Upon my word I don't see any cause for blowing out one's brains in either of those cases."

The crowd was momentarily increasing in size. At that moment a young man who was riding along the quay, noticed the throng; he alighted from his horse, threw the rein to the servant who followed him, and entered the Spladgest. He was dressed in a modest travelling suit, armed with a sword, and wrapped in a green cloak of ample proportions; a black plume, fastened to his hat by a diamond buckle, fell down over his noble face, and waved to and fro above his high forehead, crowned with long chestnut hair; his boots and spurs were covered with mud, as if he had travelled far.

As he entered, a little thickset man, wrapped, as he was, in a cloak, and with enormous gloves on his hands, was saying to the soldier:

"How do you know that he killed himself? This man no more committed suicide, my word for it, than the roof of your cathedral set itself on fire."

As the twibil makes two wounds at once, so did this sentence call forth two retorts.

"Our cathedral!" said Niels; "they are roofing it now with copper. It's that rascal Hans, they say, who set fire to it, so as to make work for his miners, among whom was his protégé Gill Stadt, whom you see here."

"What the devil!" cried the soldier, "you dare to tell me, — me, second arquebusier of the garrison

of Munckholm, — that that man didn't blow his brains out?"

"That man was murdered," coolly replied the little man.

"Pray, listen to the oracle! Go to, your little gray eyes have no better sight than your hands in the great gloves you wear on them in midsummer."

The little man's eyes shot fire.

"Soldier, pray to your patron saint that these same hands do not some day leave their mark on your face."

"Oho! let us go out!" cried the soldier, beside himself with rage. But suddenly he checked himself: "No," he said, "one must not speak of duels in presence of the dead."

The little man muttered some words in a foreign tongue, and disappeared.

"They found him on the beach at Urchtal," said a voice.

"On the beach at Urchtal?" the soldier repeated; "Captain Dispolsen was to come ashore there this morning, from Copenhagen."

"Captain Dispolsen has n't yet reached Munckholm," said another voice.

"They say that Hans of Iceland is wandering about in that neighborhood at present," added a fourth.

"In that case, this man may be the captain," said the soldier, "if Hans is the assassin; for every one knows that the Icelfander does his murdering in such a diabolical way that his victims seem to have committed suicide."

“What sort of man is this Hans, pray?” some one inquired.

“He’s a giant,” said one.

“He’s a dwarf,” said another.

“Has no one ever seen him?”

“The first time that any one sees him is also the last.”

“Hush!” said old Olly; “they say that only three persons ever exchanged human words with him, — this wretch of a Spiagudry, the widow Stadt, and — but he had an unhappy life, and an unhappy death — poor Gill there. Hush!”

“Hush!” the word was echoed on all sides.

“Now,” cried the soldier suddenly, “I am sure that it really is Captain Dispolsen; I recognize the steel chain which our prisoner, old Schumacker, presented to him when he left the castle.”

The young man with the black plume abruptly broke the silence.

“You are sure that it’s Captain Dispolsen?”

“Sure, by the worth of St. Beelzebub!” the soldier replied.

The young man went hurriedly out.

“Order a boat for Munckholm,” he said to his servant.

“But, my lord, the general —”

“You will take the horses to him. I will go tomorrow. Am I, or am I not, my own master? Come, night is approaching, and I am in haste; a boat.”

The servant obeyed, and then stood for some time watching his young master as he glided away from the shore.

II.

I will sit by the while, so thou wilt tell
Some moving story to beguile the time.

MATURIN: *Bertram.*

THE reader already knows that we are at Drontheim, one of the four principal cities of Norway, but not the residence of the viceroy. At the time when the action of the story takes place, in 1699, the kingdom of Norway was still united to Denmark, and governed by viceroys, who resided at Bergen, a larger city than Drontheim and farther to the south; a finer city, too, notwithstanding the uncomplimentary cognomen bestowed upon it by the illustrious Admiral Van Tromp

Drontheim presents a very attractive appearance as one approaches it up the fiord to which it gives its name. The harbor is reasonably wide, although vessels cannot easily enter in all weathers; but it resembles a long canal, bordered on the right by Danish and Norwegian ships, and on the left by those of foreign nations, that distinction being prescribed by the municipal regulations. In the background lies the city in the midst of a fertile plain, surmounted by the needle-like spires of its cathedral.

This cathedral, one of the most beautiful examples of Gothic architecture, as one may judge from Professor Shoenning's book,—cited so familiarly by

Spiagudry, — which describes it as it appeared before its beauty had been marred by frequent fires, bore upon its central spire the episcopal cross, which indicated that it was the cathedral church of the Lutheran bishopric of Drontheim. Above the city in the hazy distance rose the sharp, snow-covered peaks of the mountains of Kole, like the pointed jewels in an old fashioned crown.

In the centre of the harbor, within cannon-shot of either shore, the solitary fortress of Munckholm reared its walls upon a mass of wave-washed rocks, — a gloomy prison-house, wherein, at the time of which we are writing, a prisoner was confined, whose sudden disgrace, following upon a long period of prosperity, made his name famous.

Schumacker, whose birth was of the humblest, was in the first place deluged with honors by his master, and at last attained the dignified post of Grand Chancellor of Denmark and Norway. From that elevation he was hurled down to a traitor's cell, then dragged upon the scaffold; but his life was spared and he was cast into a lonely dungeon at the farthest extremity of the kingdom. His own creatures overthrew him, and he had no right to accuse them of ingratitude. Could he complain when the ladder he had raised, for no other purpose than his own elevation, broke beneath his feet?

The man who had established the order of nobility in Denmark saw, from his place of exile, the great men, whose grandeur was his work, dividing his dignities among them. The Count von Ahlefeld, his deadly enemy, was his successor as grand chancellor;

General Arensdorf, as grand marshal, had the disposal of commissions in the army; Bishop Spollyson was inspector of the universities. The only one of his enemies who did not owe his elevation to him was Count Ulric Frederic Guldenlew, natural son of King Frederic III. and Viceroy of Norway; he was the most generous and high minded of them all.

The boat of the young man with the black plume glided slowly along toward the melancholy rock of Munckholm. The sun was sinking fast behind the solitary fortress, whose frowning mass intercepted its horizontal rays, so that the peasant on the western slope of the hills of far Larsynn could see walking beside him, across the heather, the indistinct shadow of the sentinel stationed on the highest tower of Munckholm.

III.

Ah! my heart could not be more deeply wounded! A young man of no morals — he dared to look at her! his gaze sullied her purity. Claudia! the bare thought drives me frantic. — LESSING: *Emilia Galotti*.

“ANDREW, go and tell the officer of the guard that curfew will ring in half an hour. Sorsyll will relieve Duckness at the portcullis, and Maldivius will mount guard on the platform of the great tower. Let sharp watch be kept from the donjon of the Lion of Schleswig. Don't forget to fire the gun at seven o'clock for the boom to be raised across the harbor, — but no, Captain Dispolsen has not arrived yet: see that the beacon is lighted, on the other hand, and ascertain also whether the beacon of Walderhog is lighted according to the orders given yesterday. Above all things, be sure that something is ready for the captain to eat and drink. — And, I forgot — put down Toric Belfast, second arquebusier of the regiment, for two days in the dungeons: he has been absent all day.”

Thus spoke the sergeant-at-arms under the black, smoke-begrimed arches of the guard-house at Munkholm, situated in the low tower overlooking the first gateway of the Castle.

The soldiers whom he addressed left their cards or their beds, to carry out his orders, and silence reigned once more.

A moment later the measured sound of oars was heard without.

"That must be Captain Dispolsen at last!" said the sergeant, opening the little barred window which looked out on the fiord.

A small boat was just drawing up at the base of the iron gateway.

"Who goes there?" the sergeant cried in a hoarse voice.

"Open!" was the reply; "peace and safety."

"Every one is not admitted here! Have you a pass?"

"Yes."

"I must see for myself; if you lie, by the bones of my patron saint, you shall taste the water of the bay."

He closed the wicket and turned away, adding to himself: —

"It's not the captain, after all."

A light shone through the iron gateway; the rusty bolts creaked; the gate swung open and the sergeant examined the document which the new-comer handed up.

"Pass," he said. "One moment," he added curtly; "just leave the buckle of your hat outside. Visitors are n't allowed to enter state prisons with jewels. The regulation reads: 'the king and members of his family, the viceroy and members of his family, the bishop, and the commander of the garrison alone are excepted.' You don't come within any of those exceptions, do you?"

The young man, without replying, removed the

contraband buckle, and tossed it to the fisherman who had brought him, in payment for his services. Fearing that he might regret his generosity, the fisherman made haste to put a broad expanse of water between benefactor and beneficiary.

While the sergeant, grumbling at the imprudence of the chancellor's office in being so lavish with passes, was replacing the heavy bars, and tramping slowly and noisily up the winding staircase to the guard-room, the young man, throwing his coat over his shoulder, passed swiftly through the low tower, the long armory, and the artillery shed, where a few old dismounted culverins, which can be seen to-day in the museum at Copenhagen, were lying around ; a sentinel yelled sharply to him to keep away from these engines of destruction. He reached the main portcullis, which was raised to allow his pass to be inspected. From that point, followed by a soldier, he walked unhesitatingly, like one well used to the place, diagonally across one of the four square courts which flank the great circular courtyard, in the centre of which rises the huge round rock, surmounted at that time by the keep called by the name of the Lion of Schleswig, because of the imprisonment there by Rolf the Dwarf of his brother Jotham the Lion, Duke of Schleswig.

It is no part of our purpose to set down here a description of the castle keep of Munckholm, especially as the reader, finding himself confined in a state prison, might fear that he would be unable *to escape through the garden*. He would be wrong, however, for the donjon of the Lion of Schleswig, which was

set apart for the reception of prisoners of distinction, afforded them, among other advantages, the privilege of walking in a sort of uncultivated garden of considerable extent, where clumps of holly, a few old yews, and a few black pines grew among the rocks around the massive structure, enclosed by high walls and enormous towers.

When he reached the base of the round rock the young man climbed up by the steps roughly hewn in the stone to the foot of one of the towers, where a postern gave entrance to the donjon. There he blew a mighty blast upon a copper horn handed him by the keeper of the portcullis.

“Open, open!” cried a voice within; “it’s that cursed captain, of course!”

The postern swung open, and the new-comer saw, within a dimly lighted Gothic hall, a young officer stretched out negligently upon a heap of cloaks and reindeer skins, near one of those lamps with three burners which our ancestors used to hang from the rose-work of their ceilings, but which was temporarily standing on the floor. The fashionable richness and studied elegance of his costume contrasted strikingly with the scanty and rough furniture of the room. He held a book in his hand, and raised his eyes from the page as he turned half around toward the new-comer.

“Is it the captain? Welcome, captain! You hardly supposed that you were making a man who has n’t the pleasure of your acquaintance wait for your return; but we shall soon know each other, shall we not? Begin by accepting my sympathy for having

to return to this venerable castle. Even in the short time I have been here I have become as jovial as one of the owls they fasten up over prison-doors for scare-crows, and when I return to Copenhagen for my sister's wedding, devil take me if four out of a hundred of my lady-friends will recognize me! Tell me, are knots of red ribbon at the bottom of the doublet still in fashion? Have any new novels by that young Frenchwoman, Mademoiselle Scudéry, been translated? I have "Clélie" in my hand at this moment: I suppose it is still read at Copenhagen? It is my only resource in the way of love-making, now that I have to spend my time sighing at long range for a glance from all the lovely eyes I know; for the eyes of our fair young prisoner, — you know whom I mean, — beautiful though they be, have nothing to say to me. Ah! if it were not for my father's orders! I must tell you in confidence, captain, that my father — don't ever speak of it — instructed me to — you understand me — Schumacker's daughter. But all my trouble is thrown away; the lovely statue is not a woman at all, — she weeps incessantly, and never looks at me."

The young man, who had tried thus far in vain to interrupt the young officer's extreme volubility, uttered a surprised exclamation.

"What! what's that you say? instructed to seduce poor Schumacker's daughter?"

"Seduce, if you please! — if that's what they call it at Copenhagen nowadays; but I defy the devil himself to do it. Day before yesterday, being on duty, I carried in expressly for her a superb French straw-

berry which was sent me from Paris. Would you believe that she did n't once look up at me, although I walked through her room three or four times, jingling my new spurs, with rowels as big as a Lombardy ducat? — that's the latest shape, is n't it?"

"My God! my God!" the young man exclaimed, striking his forehead; "this is too much!"

"Is it not?" returned the officer, misunderstanding the exclamation. "Not the least notice of me! It's incredible, but quite true."

The young man strode back and forth, in almost uncontrollable excitement.

"Will you not take some refreshment, Captain Dispolsen?" the officer inquired.

The young man recovered himself.

"I am not Captain Dispolsen."

"What!" said the officer; sternly, rising to a sitting posture; "pray, who are you, then, to dare to intrude here at this hour?"

The stranger exhibited his pass.

"I wish to see Count Griffenfeld — I mean your prisoner."

"Count! count!" muttered the officer, with an expression of annoyance. "The pass seems to be all right: that is certainly Vice-Chancellor Grummond von Knud's signature: 'The bearer has leave to visit all royal prisons at any time.' Grummond von Knud is the brother of old General Levin von Knud, commandant at Drontheim, and the old general, you know, brought up my future brother-in-law."

"Thanks for these details of your family history,

lieutenant. Don't you think you have given me about enough of them?"

"The impertinent rascal is right," said the lieutenant, biting his lips. "Hallo, there, usher! usher of the tower! Escort this stranger to Schumacker, and don't grumble because I took down your lamp with three burners and one wick. I was glad of an opportunity to examine a piece which dates back doubtless to Sciold the Pagan, or Havar the Cleaver; besides, only crystal candelabra are hung from the ceiling now."

While the young man and his guide were crossing the deserted garden of the donjon, the young officer, a martyr to fashion, resumed the thread of the amorous adventures of Clélie the Amazon, and Horatius the One-eyed.

IV.

Mercutio. Where the devil should this Romeo be ?

Benvolio. Not to his father's : I spoke with his man.

SHAKESPEARE : *Romeo and Juliet.*

IN the mean time a man with two horses had entered the courtyard of the governor's house at Drontheim. He alighted, shaking his head discontentedly, and was about to lead the animals around to the stable when a hand was suddenly laid upon his arm, and a voice cried : —

“What! you here alone, Poël? Your master? Where is your master?”

It was the old General Levin von Knud, who saw from his window the young man's servant and the empty saddle, and rushed hastily down to the door. As he spoke he fixed upon the servant a look in which there was even more anxiety than in the question.

“Your Excellency,” replied Poël, bowing low, “my master is no longer at Drontheim.”

“Do you mean that he has been here? and that he went away again without calling on his general, without embracing his old friend? When did he come?”

“He arrived this evening, and went away this evening.”

“This evening! this evening! In God's name, where did he stop? Where has he gone?”

“He got down at the Spladgest, and took boat for Munckholm.”

“Ah! and I thought he was at the Antipodes. What has he gone to the castle for? What was he doing at the Spladgest? A knight-errant indeed! It's partly my fault, though, for why did I bring him up as I did? I wanted him to be independent, notwithstanding his high rank.”

“He's no slave to etiquette,” said Poël.

“No, but he's the slave of his own whims. However, he'll come back no doubt. Go in, and find something to eat and drink, Poël. But tell me,” and the general's face assumed an expression of anxiety, “tell me, Poël, have you been roving about much?”

“My general, we came from Bergen without turning to right or left. My master was depressed.”

“Depressed? Why, what passed between him and his father? Did n't he like the idea of the proposed marriage.”

“I don't know. But they say that his Serenity insists upon it.”

“Insists upon it! You say, Poël, that the viceroy insists upon it? Why, in that case Ordener must have declined to consent to it.”

“I don't know, your Excellency. He seemed down-hearted.”

“Down-hearted! Do you know what sort of a reception his father gave him?”

“The first time it was in the camp near Bergen. His Serenity said: ‘I don't often see you, my son.’ ‘So much the better for me, my lord and father, if

you notice it,' my master replied. Then he gave his Serenity some details about his travels in the north, and his Serenity said : 'Very good.' The next day my master returned from the palace, and said to me : 'They want me to marry ; but I must go and see my second father, General Levin.' I saddled the horses, and we came."

"Really, my good Poël," said the general, deeply moved ; "did he call me his second father ?"

"Yes, your Excellency."

"Worse luck for me if this marriage displeases him, for I would rather run the risk of being disgraced by the king, than help to force it on him. And yet, the daughter of the grand chancellor of the two kingdoms ! By the way, Poël, does Ordener know that his future mother-in-law, Countess von Ahlefeld, has been here incognito since yesterday, and that the count is expected ?"

"I don't know, my general."

"Ah," said the old governor, "he must know it. Else why should he beat a retreat as soon as he arrived ?"

Thereupon the general, with a friendly nod to Poël, acknowledged the salute of the sentinel, and went indoors again, no less anxious than when he came out.

V.

● One would have said that his heart had been agitated by every passion, but was now agitated by none ; nothing remained save the sad and piercing glance of a man deeply versed in the knowledge of mankind, and who could tell, at a glance, whither everything tended. — SCHILLER : *The Visions*.

WHEN the usher, after conducting the young stranger up the spiral staircases and through the upper rooms of the keep of the Lion of Schleswig, at last opened the door of the apartment occupied by him they were seeking, the first words which fell upon the young man's ears were the familiar ones :

“ Is it Captain Dispolsen at last ? ”

The question was propounded by an old man who was sitting with his back to the door, his elbows resting on a work-table, and his head in his hands. He was dressed in a black woollen gown ; a broken shield was fastened to the wall over a bed at one end of the room, and around it were the broken collars of the orders of the Elephant and Dannebrog ; a count's coronet turned upside down was fastened below the shield, and the collection of singular ornaments was completed by the fragments of a hand of justice bound together in the shape of a cross.

The old man was Schumacker.

“ No, my Lord,” the usher replied to his inquiry. Then he said to the stranger : “ This is the prisoner,”

and left them together ; he closed the door behind him too soon to hear the old man's querulous voice say : —

“ If it's not the captain, I do not wish to see anybody.”

At these words the stranger stopped near the door, and the prisoner, thinking that he was alone, — for he made no movement to turn around, — relapsed into his silent revery.

Suddenly he exclaimed : —

“ The captain has certainly abandoned me, and betrayed me ! Men — men are like the icicle that the Arab mistook for a diamond ; he put it carefully away in his sack, and when he went to look for it, he found not so much as a drop of water.”

“ I am not a man of that sort,” said the stranger.

Schumacker rose quickly to his feet.

“ Who is here ? Who is listening to me ? Is it some miserable tool of Guldenlew's ? ”

“ Do not speak ill of the viceroy, Herr Count.”

“ Herr Count ! Do you call me so to flatter me ? You are wasting your time. I have no power now.”

“ He who speaks to you never knew you when you were powerful, but he is none the less your friend.”

“ Then he must still hope for something from me ; one's remembrance of the unfortunate always depends upon what one hopes still to obtain from him.”

“ I am the one who ought to complain, noble count ; for I remember you, but you have forgotten me. I am Ordener.”

A joyful light shone in the old man's melancholy eyes, and a smile which he could not repress parted

his white beard as a sunbeam breaks through a cloud.

“Ordener! Welcome, Ordener. A thousand good wishes to the traveller who remembers the prisoner!”

“Had you really forgotten me?” Ordener asked.

“I had forgotten you,” said Schumacher, resuming his air of gloom, “as one forgets the breeze which blows refreshingly upon one, and passes by, — happy if it does not change to the tempest which overwhelms.”

“Count von Griffenfeld,” the young man rejoined, “did you not look for my return?”

“Old Schumacker did not look for it; but there is a young girl who reminded me this very day that you had been away a year on the 8th of May last.”

Ordener started.

“Great Heaven! Can it have have been your daughter Ethel, noble count?”

“Who else, pray?”

“Your daughter, my Lord, has deigned to count the months since my departure! Oh! how many wretched days I have passed! I have visited every part of Norway, from Christiania to Wardhus; but my thoughts always brought me back to Drontheim.”

“Make full use of your liberty, young man, so long as you are free. But tell me, pray, who you are. I would like, Ordener, to know you by some other name. The son of one of my most deadly enemies is named Ordener.”

“Perhaps, Herr Count, this deadly enemy of yours is more kindly disposed to you than you are to him.”

“You evade my question. But keep your secret;

I might perhaps find that the fruit which quenches the thirst is the poison which will kill."

"Count!" exclaimed Ordener, impatiently. "Count!" he repeated, in a tone of mingled reproach and compassion.

"Am I obliged to confide in you, who invariably, to my face, take the part of the implacable Guldenlew?" retorted Schumacker.

"The viceroy," the young man gravely interposed, "has given orders that henceforth you will be free to go where you please within the keep of the Lion of Schleswig, unattended by guards. That piece of news I picked up at Bergen, and you will doubtless be advised of it very soon."

"It is a favor I dared not hope for, and I thought that I had never spoken of my desire to any but you. However, they lessen the weight of my shackles, as my years multiply, and when the infirmities of age have made me absolutely helpless, they will say to me no doubt: 'You are free.'"

The old man smiled bitterly, and continued:—

"And have you still the same insane ideas on the subject of independence, young man?"

"If I had n't those ideas I should not be here."

"How did you come to Drontheim?"

"In the saddle."

"How did you come to Munckholm?"

"On a boat."

"Poor fool! you fancy you are free, and yet you go from a horse's back to a boat! Your will is executed, not by your own limbs, but by an animal, by inanimate matter; and you call that a will!"

“I force animate beings to obey me.”

“To assume over certain beings the right to be obeyed, is to give other beings the right to command you. Independence exists only in solitude.”

“You do not love your kind, noble count?”

The old man laughed a joyless laugh.

“I weep because I am a man, and I laugh at him who condoles with me. You will know some time, if you don't yet know, that misfortune breeds suspicion as prosperity breeds ingratitude. Listen; since you come from Bergen, tell me what favorable wind is blowing upon Captain Dispolsen. Some good fortune must have come to him to make him forget me.”

Ordener at once became grave and embarrassed.

“Dispolsen, count? My purpose in coming here to-day was to speak of him. I know that he enjoys your full confidence.”

“You know it?” the prisoner interrupted him with some uneasiness. “You are wrong. No human being on this earth has my confidence. Dispolsen, it is true, has my papers in his custody, very important papers, too. He went to Copenhagen for me, to the king. I will go so far as to admit that I relied more upon him than upon anybody else, for in my days of prosperity I never did him a service.”

“Well, noble count, I saw him to-day —”

“Your embarrassment tells me the rest; he is a traitor.”

“He is dead.”

“Dead!”

The prisoner folded his arms, and hung his head ; then looked up into the young man's face.

" And I just said that some good fortune must have come to him ! "

Then he glanced toward the wall where the tokens of his extinct grandeur hung, and waved his hand as if to dismiss the witness of a sorrow which he could not overcome.

" I do not pity him," he said, " it's only a man the less. Nor do I pity myself ; what have I to lose ? But my daughter, my poor, poor daughter ! I shall fall a victim of their infernal machinations, and what will become of her if her father is taken away ? "

He turned about abruptly and faced Ordener.

" How did he die ? Where did you see him ? "

" I saw him at the Spladgest ; it is uncertain whether he committed suicide or was murdered. "

" That's a very important question. If he was murdered, I know whence the blow came, and in that case all is lost. He was bringing me proofs of the conspiracy which is on foot against me. These proofs might have been my salvation and their ruin ; and they took the only way of destroying them. Poor Ethel ! "

" Herr Count," said Ordener, saluting him, " I will tell you to-morrow whether he was murdered. "

Schumacker made no reply, but followed Ordener as he left the room with a gaze in which was the tranquillity of despair, more awful to look upon than the tranquillity of death.

Ordener was standing in the prisoner's deserted anteroom, uncertain which way to turn. The even-

ing was well advanced, and the room was quite dark he opened a door at random, and found himself in a vast corridor, lighted only by the moon, over whose face fleecy white clouds were swiftly coursing. Her uncertain rays streamed in at intervals through the high narrow windows, and appeared and disappeared on the opposite wall like a long procession of phantoms. The young man crossed himself deliberately, and walked toward a reddish light which shone dimly at the end of the corridor, where a door stood ajar.

He looked through the opening ; a young girl was kneeling in a Gothic oratory, at the foot of a modest altar, and reciting in an undertone the litany to the Virgin, — a simple but sublime prayer, wherein the soul soars aloft to the Mother of the Seven Sorrows, and prays for naught but leave to pray.

The maiden wore a dress of black crêpe and white gauze, as if to imply in some sort, at the first glance, that her life hitherto had been sorrowful and spotlessly pure. Even in that unstudied attitude, her whole being bore the stamp of a nature such as is seldom met with. Her eyes and her luxuriant hair were black, a very rare thing in those northern regions ; her uplifted look seemed to be alight with the flame of ecstasy, rather than lost in contemplation. One would have said that it was some virgin from the shores of Cyprus, or the fields of Tibur, clad in Ossian's fantastic drapery, and prostrate before the wooden cross and stone altar of Jesus.

Ordener started back deeply agitated, for he recognized the kneeling maiden.

She was praying for her father, for the mighty fallen, for the poor old deserted prisoner, and she repeated aloud the psalm of deliverance.

She prayed for some other as well ; but Ordener did not hear the name. He heard it not, for she did not pronounce it ; but she repeated the song of the Sulamite, the wife waiting for the husband, and the return of the beloved one.

Ordener retired into the obscurity of the corridor ; he respected the privacy of this maiden soul communing with Heaven. Prayer is a great mystery, and his heart was stirred in spite of himself, with an unfamiliar thrill, which was not altogether of divine origin.

The door of the oratory was gently closed, and soon he spied, approaching him, a white form bearing a light. He stopped spell-bound by the most intense emotion he had ever known ; he drew back against the wall in the shadow ; his strength seemed to have left him ; his limbs trembled, and in the deathlike silence his heartbeats thundered in his ears.

As the girl passed him she heard the rustling of a cloak, and the sound of sharp, quick breathing.

“ My God ! ” she exclaimed.

Ordener darted forward ; with one hand he held her up, and with the other tried in vain to catch the lamp, which she let fall, and which was extinguished.

“ It is I,” he said gently.

“ Ordener ! ” cried the maiden, for the last echo of that voice, which she had not heard for a year, was still ringing in her ears.

The moonlight fell upon her lovely face, and revealed the joy which transfigured it. She added,

shyly and confusedly, disengaging herself from the young man's arms: "It is Herr Ordener."

"Himself, Countess Ethel."

"Why do you call me 'countess'?"

"Why do you call me 'Herr'?"

The young girl said nothing and smiled; the young man said nothing and sighed. She was the first to break the silence.

"How does it happen that you are here?"

"Forgive me, if my presence annoys you. I came to speak with the count, your father."

"So you came for no other purpose than to see my father?" said Ethel, with an injured air.

The young man hung his head, for her words seemed very unjust.

"Surely," said the girl, reproachfully, "it is a long time since you were last at Drontheim! But your absence from the castle has not seemed long to you."

Ordener, deeply wounded, did not reply.

"I do not blame you," she continued, in a voice which trembled with grief and anger; but she added haughtily, "I trust that you did not hear me praying, Herr Ordener?"

"Countess," the youth at last found voice to say, "I did hear you."

"Ah, Herr Ordener, it's not courteous to listen."

"I did not listen to you, noble countess," said Ordener, faintly; "I overheard you."

"I was praying for my father," rejoined Ethel, gazing earnestly at him, and as if awaiting a reply to that simple statement.

Ordener did not speak.

"I also prayed," she continued with some embarrassment, evidently watching intently to see what effect her words would produce, "I also prayed for some one who bears your name, the son of Count Guldenlew, the viceroy. For we must pray for everybody, even for those who persecute us."

The young girl blushed, for she was saying what was not true; but she was annoyed with her companion, and she thought that she had uttered his name in her prayer; whereas she had named him only in her heart.

"Ordener Guldenlew is very unfortunate, noble lady, if you number him among your persecutors; he is very fortunate, however, to fill a place in your prayers."

"Oh! no," said Ethel, pained as well as alarmed by the cold tone in which Ordener spoke, "no, I did not pray for him. I don't know what I did, or what I am doing. As to the viceroy's son, I detest him. I know him not. Don't look at me so harshly; have I offended you? Can you not forgive a poor prisoner the least little thing, — you who pass your time beside some lovely, high-born dame, who is as free and happy as yourself?"

"I, countess!" cried Ordener.

Ethel burst into tears, and the young man threw himself at her feet.

"Did n't you tell me," she continued, smiling through her tears, "that your absence seemed short to you?"

"I say that, countess?"

"Don't call me that," she said softly; "I am

no longer a countess to any one, especially not to you."

Ordener rose to his feet abruptly, unable to repress the impulse to strain her to his heart with a convulsive thrill of rapture.

"Ah! Ethel, my beloved, call me thine Ordener. Tell me, — and he gazed passionately into her tear-wet eyes, — "tell me, dost thou love me, dear?"

The maiden's reply was inaudible, for Ordener, beside himself with joy, stole from her lips as she spoke it, the first holy kiss, which in God's eyes is all-sufficient to transform true lovers into man and wife.

For a time neither spoke; it was one of those solemn moments, so rare and so brief on earth, when the soul seems to taste something of the joys of heaven. Indescribable moments are those, when two souls commune thus in language which none but they can understand; at such times all that is human keeps in the background, and their immaterial spirits join hands in mystic union for life in this world, and eternity in the world to come.

Ethel slowly withdrew from Ordener's embrace, and they stood in the moonlight, gazing enraptured into each other's eyes. The flaming eye of the youth exhaled manly pride and lion-like courage, while the half-veiled glance of the girl was instinct with the angelic modesty which enters into all the delights of love in a pure maiden's heart.

"Just now, here in the corridor," she said, at last, "you avoided me, did you not, my Ordener?"

"I did not avoid you; I was like the unfortunate

blind man, restored to sight after long years of darkness, who turns away for a moment from the unfamiliar sunlight."

"Your simile would apply with greater force to me, for during your absence, I have had no other happiness than the presence of my poor father. I passed my long days in comforting him, and," lowering her voice, "in hoping for your return. I used to read the fables of Edda to him, and when I heard him express his distrust of mankind, I would read the Gospel so that he might at least continue to trust in Heaven. Then I would talk to him of you, and he would say nothing, which proves that he is fond of you. But when I had passed a whole afternoon gazing in vain from afar upon the travellers coming into Drontheim by the high-roads, and upon the ships sailing up the fiord, he would shake his head with a bitter smile, and the tears would come to my eyes. This prison, where my whole life thus far has been spent, became hateful to me, and yet my father was still here, and his presence always sufficed for me until you came; but you were not here, and I longed for the freedom which I have never known."

There was a charm which human words cannot describe in the young girl's eyes, in her affectionate naïveté, and in the maidenly hesitation of her heart's outpouring. Ordener listened with the dreamy joy of a mortal transported from the world of realities to an ideal world.

"And I," said he, "have no further desire for the freedom which you do not share."

"What do you mean, Ordener?" exclaimed Ethel, eagerly, — "that you will leave us no more?"

The question reminded the young man of all that he had forgotten.

"My dear Ethel, I must leave you this evening. I shall see you again to-morrow, and then leave you once more, until I return to stay with you always."

"Alas!" Ethel interrupted him, sadly, "more absence!"

"I say again, Ethel, my best-beloved, that I will soon return again, either to take you away from this prison, or to bury myself here with you."

"A prisoner with him!" she whispered softly. "Ah! do not deceive me, may I really hope for such bliss?"

"By what shall I swear it? What would you have me do?" cried Ordener. "Tell me, my Ethel, are you not my wife?" In a transport of passion he pressed her convulsively to his heart.

"I am all yours," she murmured faintly.

These two pure and noble hearts beat joyfully against each other, and were but the purer and nobler for the contact.

At this moment there was a loud burst of laughter almost beside them. A man wrapped in a cloak, drew from beneath it a lantern, whose rays fell full upon the terrified, blushing face of Ethel, and the surprised and haughty features of Ordener.

"Courage, my pretty couple! courage! It seems to me that after such a short journey in the land of Affection, you cannot have followed all the windings of the streamlet Sentiment, but must have taken a

short cut to arrive so soon at the hamlet of the Kiss."

Our readers will doubtless have recognized the lieutenant who was so ardent an admirer of Mlle. de Scudéry.

Torn from the perusal of *Clelie* by the midnight bell, which the lovers failed to hear, he was making his nightly round in the donjon. As he was passing by the eastern end of the corridor, he caught a few words, and saw what seemed to be two ghosts moving about in the moonlight. Being naturally of an inquisitive turn, and insensible to fear, he hid his lantern under his cloak, and stole up on tip-toe to within a short distance of the phantoms, whose ecstasy was rudely interrupted by his burst of laughter.

Ethel's first impulse was to fly, but she thought better of it and turned to Ordener as if entreating him to protect her, and hid her glowing face in his bosom.

He raised his head as proudly as any king.

"Woe to the man," he said, "woe to the man who frightens and grieves thee, my Ethel!"

"Yes, indeed," retorted the lieutenant, "woe to me if I have been so unfortunate as to frighten the lovely Mandane!"

"Herr Lieutenant," said Ordener, haughtily, "you will oblige me by holding your peace."

"Herr Insolent," retorted the officer, "you will oblige me by holding your peace."

"Do you hear me?" Ordener replied in a voice of thunder; "purchase your pardon by silence."

"*Tibi tua*," said the lieutenant. "Take your advice home, and purchase your pardon by silence."

"Hold your peace!" shouted Ordener in a voice which made the windows rattle; he led the trembling girl to one of the old arm-chairs in the corridor, and shook the officer roughly by the arm.

"Oho! peasant," said the latter, half-amused and half-irritated, "you don't notice that this doublet which you are rumpling so unconcernedly is of the finest Abingdon velvet."

Ordener looked sternly at him.

"Lieutenant," he said, "my patience is shorter than my sword."

"I understand you, my gay young spark," said the lieutenant, with a sarcastic smile; "you would be very glad to have me do you such an honor; but do you know who I am? No, no; 'prince against prince, and shepherd against shepherd,' as Leander says."

"If one must also say, 'coward against coward,'" retorted Ordener, "I certainly should not have the inestimable honor of measuring swords with you."

"I would lose my temper, my esteemed shepherd, if you only wore a uniform."

"I have no gold lace or fringe, lieutenant, but I wear a sword."

The proud young man, throwing his cloak aside, fixed his cap firmly on his head, and had his hand on his sword-hilt, when Ethel, aroused by his imminent danger, seized his arm, and hung upon his neck with a cry of terror and entreaty.

"You are very wise, my lovely damsel, if you

prefer that the lad should not be punished for his impudence," said the lieutenant, who had responded, quite unmoved, to Ordener's threatening motion by standing at guard ; " for Cyrus was just on the point of quarrelling with Cambyzes, — if I don't do this vassal too much honor by comparing him with Cambyzes."

" In Heaven's name, Ordener," said Ethel, " let me not be the cause and the witness of such a calamity ! " She added, raising her beautiful eyes to his, " Ordener, I implore you ! "

Ordener gently pushed back his half-drawn blade into its scabbard, and the lieutenant cried : —

" I' faith, chevalier, — I don't know whether you are one, but I give you the title because you seem to me to deserve it, — let us govern our actions by the laws of true courage, but not by those of gallantry. The damsel is right ; engagements like that which I deem you worthy to enter into with me ought to have no ladies for witnesses, although, if my charming friend will forgive me for saying so, they frequently are caused by ladies. We can properly speak here only of the *duellum remotum*, and if you, as the insulted party, will fix the time, place, and weapons, my fine Toledo blade or my Merida dagger will be at the service of your cleaver from the forges of Ashkreuth, or your hunting-knife tempered in the lake of Sparbo.

The " postponed duel," which the officer suggested to Ordener, was much in vogue in the North, where the knowing ones claim that duelling has gone out of fashion. The most valiant gentlemen thought it not beneath them to issue or to accept a challenge

to this *duellum remotum*, which might be postponed for several months or years, and in the interval the adversaries were bound in honor not to refer by word or deed to the affair which led to the challenge. For instance, if it were a love affair, the rivals abstained from visiting the object of their affections, so that matters might remain in the same condition. In that regard full confidence was placed in the loyalty of the adversaries, — just as in the tournaments of former days, if the judges thought that the laws of courtesy had been violated, they threw their bâton into the lists, and all the combatants instantly stopped where they were; but until the point was decided the sword of the victor remained at the same distance from the throat of the vanquished.

“Very well, chevalier,” said Ordener, after a moment’s reflection. “I will send a messenger to advise you as to time and place.”

“So be it,” the lieutenant replied; “it’s better so, as it will give me time to be present at the wedding of my sister; for you must know that you will have the honor of fighting with the future brother-in-law of a great nobleman, son of the viceroy of Norway, Baron Ordener Guldenlew, who, on the occasion of this illustrious union, as Artamenes says, is to be created Count von Daneskiold, colonel, and Knight of the Elephant. And I myself, the son of the grand chancellor of the two kingdoms, shall be made a captain doubtless.”

“Very well, very well, Lieutenant Ahlefeld,” said Ordener, testily, “you are not a captain yet, nor the

viceroy's son a colonel,—and swords are still swords."

"And boors are still boors, whatever one may do to raise them to one's own level," retorted the lieutenant between his teeth.

"Chevalier," continued Ordener, "you know the established courtesy in such matters. You will not come into the donjon any more, and you will keep silent about the affair."

"So far as silence is concerned, you may trust me to be as dumb as Mucius Scaevola when he had his hand in the fire. Furthermore I will not enter the donjon, nor shall any Argus-eyed officer of the garrison; for I have just received orders to leave Schmacker unguarded in the future, an order which I was instructed to make known to him this evening. I should have done so had I not passed a large part of the evening trying on some new boots from Cracow. Between ourselves it's a very imprudent order. Would you like me to show you my boots?"

During this dialogue, Ethel, seeing that they had apparently cooled down, and having no idea what a *duellum remotum* might be, had taken her leave, after whispering softly in Ordener's ear, "Till tomorrow."

"I would be very glad, Lieutenant Ahlefeld, if you would help me to leave the fort."

"Gladly," said Ahlefeld, "although it's a little late, or I might say very early. How will you find a boat?"

"That's my affair."

They passed through the garden, the circular court,

and the square court, conversing in the most friendly way, the lieutenant's presence removing all obstacles. They crossed the portcullis, and came at last by way of the artillery-shed and the armory to the low tower, where the iron gate was opened at the lieutenant's command.

"Au revoir, Lieutenant Ahlefeld," said Ordener.

"Au revoir," the lieutenant replied. "I affirm that you are a knightly champion, although I do not know who you are, nor do I know whether those of your peers who will accompany you to our place of meeting will be entitled by their rank to the title of seconds, or will have to be content with the more modest name of witnesses."

They exchanged a warm grasp of the hand, and the lieutenant, humming an air by Lulli, returned to his Polish boots and his French novel.

Ordener, left alone upon the door-sill, removed his clothes, wrapped them in his cloak, and fastened them above his head with his sword-belt. He then put in practice Schumacker's theory of true liberty, by leaping into the cool, still waters of the fiord, and swimming shoreward through the darkness, in the direction of the Spladgest, which was reasonably sure to be his ultimate destination, dead or alive.

The fatiguing exertions of the day had thoroughly exhausted him, and he had great difficulty in reaching the shore. He dressed himself in haste, and hurried toward the Spladgest, which rose, a black mass, on the public square, the moon being now entirely hidden.

As he approached the building he heard the sound

of voices, and a dim light shone out through the upper opening. Amazed thereat, he knocked loudly on the square door; the voices at once ceased, and the light disappeared. He knocked again; the light reappeared, and by it he saw something come from the window and crouch down on the flat roof. A third time Ordener thundered on the door with his sword hilt, and cried:—

“Open, in the name of his Majesty the king! Open in the name of his Serenity the viceroy!”

The door at last swung slowly open, and Ordener found himself looking into Spiagudry's long, thin, pale face; his clothes were disordered, his eyes rolling wildly around, his hair standing on end, and in his blood-stained hand he carried a lamp, whose flame trembled less noticeably than his long body.

VI.

Pirro. Never!

Angelo. What! I believe you mean to play the saint. Wretch! if you say a single word —

Pirro. But, Angelo, I conjure you, for the love of God —

Angelo. Let alone what you cannot prevent.

Pirro. Ah! when the devil holds you by a single hair, you must give up your whole head to him. Wretch that I am!

LESSING: *Emilia Galotti.*

ABOUT an hour after the young traveller with the black plume took his departure from the Spladgest, it being then quite dark, and the crowd having vanished altogether, Oglypiglap closed the outer door of the dismal structure, while his master, Spiagudry, was washing for the last time the bodies that lay on the slabs. Then they withdrew together to their far from luxurious quarters, and while Oglypiglap went calmly to sleep on his litter pallet, like one of the corpses intrusted to his care, the venerable Spiagudry, sitting before a stone table covered with old books, dried plants, and fleshless bones, lost himself in the profound studies which, although they were really very innocent, had contributed not a little to give him the name among the people of a sorcerer and one who held communion with the devil, — the inevitable fate of those who indulged in scientific investigation at that period.

He had been absorbed in his meditations for several hours, and was at last ready to leave his books for his bed. He stopped for the night at this gloomy passage in Thormodus Torfœus:--

“When a man lights his lamp, death will enter his house before it is extinguished.”

“By your leave, learned doctor,” he said beneath his breath, “that won’t come true in my case to-night.” And he took up his lamp to blow it out.

“Spiagudry!” cried a voice from the room where the bodies were.

The old keeper trembled in every limb. It was not that he believed, as another might have done in his place, that the joyless guests of the Spladgest were in revolt against their guardian. He knew too much to fall a prey to imaginary terrors; and the alarm which he really felt was due to the fact that he knew only too well the voice that was calling him.

“Spiagudry!” it called again angrily, “must I come and tear your ears off to make you hear?”

“May St. Hospitius have mercy, not on my soul, but on my body!” exclaimed the terrified old man. With a step which fear quickened and slackened at the same time, he walked to the second side-door, which he opened. Our readers will not have forgotten that this door opened into the domain of the dead.

The lamp which he carried shone upon a strange and repellent picture. On one side the tall, thin, slightly bent body of Spiagudry; on the other, a short, thick-set man dressed from head to foot in the

skins of all sorts of animals, still stained with blood. He was standing at the feet of Gill Stadt, whose body, with those of the girl and the captain, formed the background of the scene. These three dumb witnesses, lying in a sort of half-shadow, were the only ones who could have looked, without fleeing in affright, upon the two living beings whose interview was about to begin.

The features of the short man, which stood out sharply in the light, were savage and uncouth to a remarkable degree. His bushy beard was fiery red, and his head, which was partly hidden under an elk-skin cap, seemed to bristle with hair of the same hue; his mouth was large, his lips thick, and his teeth white and sharp, and set far apart; his nose was hooked like an eagle's beak; his restless, grayish-blue eye cast upon Spiagudry a sidelong glance, in which the ferocity of the tiger was softened only by the cunning of the monkey.

This extraordinary individual was armed with a long sword, a naked dagger, and an axe with a stone head, upon the long handle of which he was leaning; his hands were covered with great gloves made of the skin of the blue fox.

"This old ghost has kept me waiting a long while," he said to himself, with a sort of roar like a wild beast.

Spiagudry would certainly have turned pale with fright, if it had been possible.

"Do you know," continued the little man, addressing him directly, "that I come from the beach of Urchtal? Do you wish to exchange your straw bed

for one of these beds of stone, that you delay me thus ? ”

Spiagudry trembled more violently than ever ; the only two teeth that he possessed fairly chattered.

“Forgive me, master,” he said, bending his long body down to the little man’s level, “I was sleeping very soundly.”

“Do you want me to show you how to sleep more soundly still ? ”

Spiagudry made a grimace which was rather more amiable than that in which his jovial moods were wont to find expression.

“Well, what is it ? ” the little man went on. “What’s the matter ? Isn’t my presence agreeable to you ? ”

“Oh ! my lord and master,” replied the old keeper, “I can certainly conceive no greater happiness than the sight of your Excellency.”

The effort he made to impart an expression of pleasure to his panic-stricken countenance would have made any but a dead man laugh.

“Old fox without a tail, my Excellency orders you to hand over Gill Stadt’s clothes.”

As he uttered the name the savage, sneering face of the little man became sad and gloomy.

“Oh ! master, forgive me, but I have n’t them,” said Spiagudry ; “your Grace knows that we are obliged to turn over all the property of miners to the royal treasury ; for the king, as their guardian, inherits from them.”

The little man turned toward the body, and folded his arms.

“He is right,” he said in a hollow voice : “these wretched miners are like the eider-duck ; they build their nests for them, and then steal their down.”¹

He raised the body in his arms, and held it in a close embrace, uttering wild cries of love and grief, like the growling of a bear caressing her cub. With these inarticulate sounds he mingled now and then some words in a strange jargon which Spiagudry did not understand.

At last he laid the body back upon the stone and turned again to the keeper.

“Accursed sorcerer, do you know the name of the soldier, born under an unlucky star, who had the misfortune to be preferred to Gill Stadt by this creature ?”

As he spoke he thrust his foot against the lifeless remains of Guth Stersen.

Spiagudry shook his head.

“Very well ! by the axe of Ingolphus, the chief of my race, I will exterminate all those who wear that uniform ;” and he pointed to the clothes taken from the officer. “The man upon whom I seek to be revenged will be among the number. I will burn down the whole forest in order to burn the poisonous shrub which it contains. I swore to do it on the day Gill died, and I have already given him one companion, at which his shade ought to rejoice. — Oh, Gill ! there thou liest helpless, lifeless, — thou who didst rival the seal in swimming and the chamois in fleetness of foot, and didst vanquish the

¹ The Norwegian peasants build nests for the eider-duck, and then steal upon them and pluck them.

bear of the Kole Mountains in the death-grapple ; there thou liest motionless, who didst make the circuit of Drontheimhus from Orkel to the Lake of Smiasen in a day, and who didst climb the snowy peaks of the Dofre-Fjeld, as the squirrel climbs the oak ; there thou liest voiceless, Gill, who, standing on the stormy top of Kongsberg, didst dominate the thunder with thy song. Oh, Gill ! in vain did I fill for thee the mines of Fa-roër ; in vain did I apply the torch to the cathedral church of Drontheim ; all my toil is thrown away, and I shall never see the race of the children of Iceland, the posterity of Ingolphus the Exterminator perpetuated in thee ; thou wilt not inherit my axe of stone ; but thou on the other hand dost bequeath to me thy skull, wherefrom henceforth to drink the water of the sea and the hot blood of men."

As he spoke he seized the head of the corpse.

"Spiagudry," he added, "help me ;" and he tore off his gloves, revealing his great hands, armed with long nails, as hard and horny as those of a wild beast.

Spiagudry, when he saw that he was preparing to cut out the skull with his dagger, cried with an accent of horror which he could not repress : —

"Just God ! master ! a dead man !"

"Why," retorted the little man, calmly, "would you prefer that I should sharpen my blade here on the spot on a living man ?"

"Oh ! permit me to entreat your Highness. How can your Excellency dream of profaning — Your Grace — my lord, your Serenity cannot mean —"

"Will you have done, you living skeleton ? Do I

need all these titles to be convinced of your wholesome respect for my sword ? ”

“ By St. Waldemar, by St. Usuph, in St. Hospitius’ name, spare the dead ! ”

“ Help me, and don’t speak of saints to the devil.”

“ Oh ! my lord,” continued Spiagudry beseechingly, “ by your illustrious ancestor St. Ingolphus ! ”

“ Ingolphus the Exterminator was an unregenerate like myself.”

“ In Heaven’s name,” said the old man, throwing himself at his feet, “ that is the state which I would have you avoid.”

The little man was beside himself with impatience. His gray eyes shone like two burning coals.

“ Help me ! ” he said again, brandishing his sword.

These two words were uttered in the voice in which a lion would utter them if he could speak. The keeper, trembling and half-dead with fear, took his seat upon the black stone, and held Gill’s cold, damp head in his hands, while the little man parted the flesh and cut out the skull with remarkable dexterity. When the operation was completed, he gazed for some moments at the bleeding skull, muttering some words in a strange tongue ; then he handed it to Spiagudry to be dressed and washed, saying with a sort of roar :—

“ When I die I shall not have the consolation of thinking that an inheritor of the spirit of Ingolphus will drink sea-water and human blood from my skull.”

He mused darkly for a time, and then continued :

“ Tempest is followed by tempest, the avalanche

brings avalanches in its train, and I shall be the last of my race. Why did not Gill hate as I do everything which wears a human face? What demon, hostile to the demon of Ingolphus, impelled him to go to those cursed mines in search of paltry gold?"

Spiagudry, bringing back Gill's skull, interrupted him: —

"Your Excellency is right; gold itself, so says Snorro Sturleson, is often bought too dear."

"You remind me," said the little man, "of a commission I have for you. Here is an iron box which I found on this officer; you see that you didn't get all his belongings. It is so carefully secured that it must contain gold, which is the only precious thing in the eyes of men; you will hand it to Widow Stadt, at the village of Thoctree, to pay her for her son."

He took from his deer-skin sack a very small iron box, which Spiagudry took from his hands with a bow.

"Carry out my orders to the letter," said the little man, with a piercing look; "remember that nothing can prevent two demons from meeting; I believe you are more of a coward than a miser, and you will answer to me for this box."

"Oh! master, with my soul!"

"No, but with your bones and your flesh."

At that moment there was a violent blow upon the outer door of the Spladgest. The little man started in surprise, Spiagudry shuddered, and covered his lamp with his hand.

"What is it?" grumbled the little man. "Why,

you old villain, how you will quake when you hear the trumpet sound for the last judgment !”

A second blow, more violent than the first, made the door tremble on its hinges.

“It’s some dead man in a hurry to come in,” said the little man.

“No, master,” muttered Spiagudry, “they don’t bring dead men here after midnight.”

“Dead or living — he drives me away. Spiagudry, be faithful and discreet. I swear to you by the ghost of Ingolphus, and the skull of Gill Stadt, that you shall pass the whole regiment of Munckholm in review here in your hostelry for corpses.

He hung Gill’s skull at his belt, put on his gloves, and with the agility of a chamois, assisted by Spiagudry’s shoulders, leaped out through the opening above, and disappeared.

A third blow shook the Spladgest to its foundations, and a voice of thunder called upon those within to open in the name of the king and the viceroy. Thereupon the old keeper, a prey to two distinct terrors, one of which might be denominated *memory*, and the other *hope*, went to the square door, and opened it.

VII.

She wore herself out, pursuing through rough and thorny paths the paltry joy to which all temporal felicity dwindles at last, but never succeeded in attaining it. — *Confessions of Saint Augustine.*

AFTER leaving Poël, the governor of Drontheim returned to his study, buried himself in a capacious easy-chair, and to distract his thoughts ordered one of his secretaries to read to him the various petitions presented to the government.

The secretary bowed respectfully and began : —

“1st. Reverend Doctor Anglyvius asks that steps may be taken to supersede Reverend Doctor Foxtipp as director of the Episcopal library because of his incapacity. The petitioner is unable to suggest a successor for the said incompetent director ; he will only say that he, Doctor Anglyvius, for a long time performed the duties of a librarian —”

“Turn the rascal over to the bishop,” the general interposed.

“2d. Athanasius Munder, priest, and Minister of Prisons, prays that twelve repentant convicts may be pardoned on the occasion of the auspicious union of his Courtesy, Ordener Guldenlew, Baron von Thorvick, Knight of Dannebrog, and son of the viceroy, with the most noble Ulrica von Ahlefeld, daughter of his Grace Count von Ahlefeld, grand chancellor of the two kingdoms.”

“Pass that by,” said the general; “I pity the convicts.”

“3d. Faustus-Prudens Destrombides, a Norwegian subject and Latin poet, craves leave to write the epithalamium of the said bride and groom.”

“Aha! the good fellow must be well along in years, for he is the same man who composed an epithalamium in 1674 for the projected marriage between Schumacker, then Count von Griffenfeld, and Princess Louise-Charlotte of Holstein Augustenbourg, — a marriage which did not come off. I greatly fear,” the governor added in an undertone, “that worthy Faustus-Prudens is fated to be the bard of marriages that do not come off. — Pass that petition by, and go on with the next. We will ascertain, for the benefit of the poet, if there is not a vacant bed in the hospital of Drontheim.”

“4th. The miners of Guldbranshál, the Fa-roër Islands, Sund-Moër, Hubfallo, Rœraas, and Kongsberg pray to be relieved from the burdens of royal guardianship.”

“These miners are troublesome fellows; I am told that they are already beginning to complain of the long silence of the authorities concerning their request. Let it be postponed for careful examination.”

“5th. Braal, fisherman, gives notice, by virtue of the *Odelsrecht*,¹ that he persists in his intention to repurchase his patrimony.”

¹ *Odelsrecht* — a curious law which gave rise to a species of *majorat* among the Norwegian peasantry. Every man who was compelled to dispose of his patrimony could prevent the purchaser from aliening it by giving notice to the authorities once every ten years of his purpose to repurchase it.

“6th. The syndics of Næs, Lœvig, Indal, Skongen, Stod, Sparbo, and other towns and villages of northern Drontheimhus, pray that a price may be put upon the head of the brigand, murderer, and incendiary, Hans, said to be a native of Klipstadur in Iceland. The petition is opposed by Nychol Orugix, executioner of Drontheimhus, who claims that Hans is his own property. It is supported by Benignus Spiagudry, keeper of the Spladgest, to whom his body will revert.”

“This rascal is a very dangerous fellow,” said the general, — “especially when there is fear of trouble among the miners. Let a reward of a thousand royal crowns be offered for his head.”

“7th. Benignus Spiagudry, physician, antiquary, sculptor, mineralogist, naturalist, botanist, legist, chemist, machinist, physicist, astronomer, theologian, grammarian —”

“Well, well !” the general interrupted, “is n’t this the same Spiagudry who is keeper of the Spladgest ?”

“The very same, your Excellency,” the secretary replied : —

“keeper, for his Majesty, of the establishment called the Spladgest, in the royal city of Drontheim, represents, — that he, Benignus Spiagudry, discovered that the fixed stars, so called, are not lighted by the planet called the Sun ; *also*, that the true name of Odin is Frigga, son of Fridulph : *also*, that the sea-worm lives in sand : *also*, that the noise made by the people on shore drives the fish away from the coast of Norway, so that the means of subsistence diminish as the population increases : *also*, that the fiord called Otte-Sund

was formerly called Limfiord, and did not receive the name of Otte-Sund until Otto the Red threw his lance into it. He also represents that it was by his advice and under his direction that an old statue of Freya was made over into the statue of Justice, which adorns the public square of Drontheim, and the lion which used to be under the idol's feet was transformed into a devil, representing crime : *also —* ”

“ Oh ! a truce to his eminent services. Let us see what he wants.”

The secretary turned over several leaves and continued : —

“ Your humble petitioner ventures to pray that he may be rewarded for so many discoveries and other services in the interest of science and literature, by an increase of ten ascalins in the tax upon every dead body, male or female, — a measure which could not fail to be gratifying to the dead by proving to them the high estimate placed upon their persons.”

At that moment the study door was thrown open, and the usher announced : —

“ The Most Noble Countess von Ahlefeld.”

The announcement was immediately followed by the entrance of a lady with the coronet of a countess on her head, and richly clad in a dress of scarlet satin, trimmed with ermine and gold fringe. She took the hand which the general offered her, and sat down beside his chair.

The countess was in the neighborhood of fifty. Age could hardly add to the wrinkles with which the cares of pride and ambition had furrowed her

face. She honored the old governor with a haughty glance and a hypocritical smile.

“Well, general, your ward keeps us waiting. He should have been here before sunset.”

“And so he would have, countess, had he not gone to Munckholm immediately upon his arrival.”

“To Munckholm! not to see Schumacker, I trust.”

“That may well be.”

“Baron Thorvick’s first visit paid to Schumacker!”

“Why not, countess? Schumacker is unfortunate.”

“General! the viceroy’s son have relations with a prisoner of state!”

“Frederic Guldenlew, when he placed his son in my hands, madame, begged me to bring him up as I would bring up a son of my own. I thought that to know Schumacker might be useful to Ordener, who will some day be as powerful as he was. Consequently, with the viceroy’s permission, I asked my brother, Grummond von Knud, for a pass to enter all the prisons, and I gave it to Ordener. He makes good use of it.”

“How long is it, general, since Baron Ordener acquired this valuable acquaintance?”

“A little more than a year, madame; it would seem that Schumacker’s society pleased him, for it kept him a long while at Drontheim, and it was only by my express orders, and very regretfully, that he started to make the tour of Norway last year.”

“Pray, does Schumacker know that his comforter is the son of one of his bitterest enemies?”

“He knows that he is a friend, and that is enough for him, as it is for us.”

"But, my dear general," said the countess with a searching glance, "did you know, when you consented to this intimacy, when you brought it about, indeed, that Schumacker had a daughter?"

"I did know it, countess."

"And that circumstance seemed to you of no importance in connection with your pupil?"

"The ward of Levin von Knud, the son of Frederic Guldenlew, is an honorable man. Ordener knows the barrier which separates him from Schumacker's daughter; he is incapable of winning the heart of any maiden without honorable motives, least of all the daughter of an unfortunate man."

The noble Countess von Ahlefeld turned red and pale by turns. She turned her head away, seeking to avoid the calm, reproachful gaze of the old man.

"At all events," she stammered, "permit me to say, general, that this connection seems to me both extraordinary and ill-advised. It is said that the miners are threatening to rise in revolt, and that Schumacker's name is involved in the affair."

"Madame, you astound me!" cried the governor; "hitherto Schumacker has accepted his fate without a murmur. The report is baseless, without doubt."

As he spoke the door opened, and the usher announced that a messenger from his Grace the grand chancellor desired to speak with the countess.

She rose hastily, saluted the governor, and left him to continue his examination of the petitions, while she hurried to her apartments in a wing of the palace, and ordered that the messenger be sent thither.

She had been for some moments sitting on a luxurious sofa, surrounded by her women, when the messenger entered. As her eyes fell upon him the countess made an instinctive gesture of repugnance, but followed it up at once with an amiable smile.

The exterior appearance of the new-comer had nothing repellent about it at first sight. He was a man rather below medium height, of a corpulent habit which suggested almost anything rather than a courier. Upon a closer scrutiny his expression was seen to be open to the point of impudence, and there was something sinister, almost diabolic, in the leer upon his face. He bowed low before the countess, and handed her a package sealed with silk thread.

“Madame,” he said, “deign to permit me to venture to lay at your feet an important message from his Grace your illustrious spouse, my revered master.”

“Is he not coming himself? and how did it happen that he selected you as his messenger?” the countess asked.

“Important duties compel his Grace to defer his coming, and this letter is to inform you thereof, madame. For my own part, in accordance with the command of my noble master, I am to enjoy the signal honor of a private interview with you.”

“With me! an interview with me, Musdœmon?”

“If the prospect is painful to the noble countess, I, her unworthy servant, am in despair.”

“Painful! no, certainly not,” rejoined the countess, forcing herself to smile, “but is this interview necessary?”

The messenger bowed to the floor.

“Absolutely necessary ! the letter which the illustrious countess condescends to receive at my hands contains the formal command therefor.”

It was a strange thing to see the haughty Countess von Ahlefeld tremble and turn pale before a servant who witnessed such profound respect for her. She slowly opened the packet, and read what it contained. She read it, and re-read it, then said to her women, almost inaudibly : —

“Leave us.”

“Will not the noble countess deign to pardon me the liberty I venture to take, and the annoyance I seem to cause her ?” said the messenger, bending his knee.

“On the other hand,” the countess replied with a forced smile, “pray believe that it gives me much pleasure to see you.”

The countess’s women left the room.

“You seem to have forgotten, Elphega, that there was a time when a tête-à-tête with me was not so disagreeable to you.”

These words were addressed by the messenger to the countess, accompanied with such a smile as the devil’s face must wear when the truce has expired, and he lays hold of a soul which has sold itself to him.

The high-born dame hung her head in shame.

“Indeed I have not forgotten !” she muttered.

“Poor fool ! how can you blush for things which no human eye ever saw.”

“God sees what men do not see.”

“God, weak woman! you are not worthy to have deceived your husband, for he is less credulous than you.”

“You are very ungenerous to sneer at my remorse, Musdæmon.”

“Ah! if you feel remorse, Elphega, why do you sneer at it yourself every day by committing new crimes?”

Countess von Ahlefeld hid her face in her hands; the messenger continued: —

“Elphega, you must make your choice between remorse and no more crime, or crime and no more remorse. Do as I do, choose the latter alternative; it is the better, or at least the more enjoyable.”

“May your words not rise up against you hereafter!” said the countess under her breath.

“Come, come, my dear, a truce to your pleasantry.”

With that Musdæmon sat down beside the countess and put his arm about her neck.

“Elphega,” he said, “try to remain, in spirit at least, what you were twenty years ago.”

The unhappy countess, at the mercy of her accomplice, tried to respond to his repulsive caress. In this embrace of two persons who despised and abhorred each other beyond measure there was something too revolting even for their degenerate minds. The illicit caresses which were once their joy, and which some incomprehensible feeling of necessity forced them still to exchange, were now their torture. How strange and yet how just a fate had overtaken their guilty love! their crime had become their punishment.

The countess, to put an end to the tormenting mockery, finally asked her hated lover, extricating herself from his embrace, with what verbal message her husband had entrusted him.

“Ahlefeld,” said Musdœmon, “although his power is on the point of being solidified by the marriage of Ordener Guldenlew with our daughter —”

“Our daughter!” cried the haughty countess, fixing upon Musdœmon a glance of mingled surprise and disdain.

“Why,” said the messenger, coolly, “I fancy that Ulrica belongs to me at least as much as to him. I was saying that this marriage would not entirely satisfy your husband, if Schumacker were not absolutely crushed at the same time. In the depths of his prison, the former favorite is still almost as much to be dreaded as in his palace. He has friends at court, who are obscure, it is true, but powerful from their very obscurity; and the king, when he was informed a month since that the negotiations between the grand chancellor and the Duke of Holstein-Ploen were making little progress, exclaimed impatiently, ‘Griffenfeld alone knew more than all of them.’ A schemer named Dispolsen came from Munckholm to Copenhagen, and had several secret audiences with him, after which the king sent to the chancellor’s office, where they are lodged, for Schumacker’s patents of nobility and muniments of title. It is not known to what Schumacker aspires; but even if he desires nothing more than liberty, liberty for a prisoner of state is synonymous with power. It is absolutely essential, therefore, that he should

die, and die in due form of law ; so we are at work fabricating a crime to put upon him. Your husband, Elphega, on the pretext of making a tour of inspection of the northern provinces, *incognito*, proposes to make sure for himself of the results of our intriguing among the miners, whom it is our plan to incite to revolt in Schumacker's name ; it will be a simple matter to crush out the trouble afterwards. What disturbs us is the loss of several important papers connected with this plot, which we have every reason to believe are in the hands of Dispolsen. Knowing, therefore, that he had started back from Copenhagen to Munckholm, bringing to Schumacker his title-deeds, and patents, and perhaps the other documents which may ruin, or at least compromise us, we stationed a party of trusty fellows in the gorges of Kole to make way with him and seize his papers. But if, as I am told, Dispolsen came from Bergen by sea, all our trouble in that direction is wasted. Just as I arrived here, however, I heard some vague rumors that a captain named Dispolsen had been murdered. We shall see. Meanwhile we are on the lookout for a famous outlaw, Hans of Iceland, so-called, whom we are anxious to put at the head of the revolt of the miners. And now, my dear, what news have you to give me of Drontheim ? Has the pretty bird of Munckholm been caught in her cage ? Has the old minister's daughter at last fallen victim to the charms of our *falcofulvus*, our son Frederic ? ”

Again the countess's pride rose in revolt.

“ Our son ! ”

“ Faith, how old is he ? Twenty-four ? It is

twenty-six years since our acquaintance began, Elphega."

"God knows," cries the countess, "that my Frederic is the lawful heir of the grand chancellor."

"Even if God does know it," laughed Musdœmon, "the devil may not. However, your Frederic is no better than an idiot, and unworthy of me; it's not worth while to quarrel over such a small matter. He is good for nothing but to lead a girl astray. Has he succeeded in that?"

"Not yet, so far as I know."

"Come, come, Elphega, you must try to play a less passive part in our affairs. The count's rôle and mine are active enough, as you see. To-morrow I return to your husband. Do not, I beg you, confine your efforts to praying for our sins, like the Madonna whom the Italians invoke when they commit a murder. Ahlefeld must find a way to reward me more handsomely than he has done as yet. My fortunes are bound up with yours, but I am weary of being the husband's servant when I am the wife's lover, and of acting as governor, preceptor, or pedagogue, when I am very near being the father."

At this moment the bells rang midnight, and one of the women entered to remind the countess that, by the rules of the palace, all lights must be extinguished at that hour. The countess was only too glad to put an end to so painful an interview, and recalled her attendants.

"Will the gracious countess permit me," said Musdœmon, as he withdrew, "to cherish the hope of seeing her again to-morrow, and laying at her feet the homage of my profound respect?"

VIII.

Hermia. It cannot be but thou hast murdered him :
So should a murderer look, so dread, so grim.

SHAKESPEARE : *Midsummer Night's Dream.*

"UPON my honor, old man," said Ordener to Spiagudry, "I began to think that it was the duty of the dead bodies quartered here to open the door."

"Pardon, my lord," replied the keeper, with the names of the king and viceroy still ringing in his ears ; he repeated the same excuse that he made to his previous visitor : "I was sound asleep."

"In that case, it seems that your deceased guests are not asleep, for it must have been they whom I distinctly heard talking just now."

"You heard," said Spiagudry, much embarrassed, "you heard — ?"

"Great Heavens, yes ! but what matters it ? I am not here to attend to your business, but to have you attend to mine. Let us go in."

Spiagudry was by no means anxious to admit the new-comer to the vicinity of Gill's body, but his last words reassured him a little ; and then, had he the power to resist ?

So he allowed the young man to enter, and said, as he closed the door : —

“Benignus Spiagudry is at your service for any purpose connected with human science. But if, as your nocturnal visit would seem to indicate, you think that you are talking to a sorcerer, you are wrong! *ne famam credas*: I am only a student. Deign to enter my laboratory, sir stranger.”

“No,” said Ordener, “we have to do with these bodies.”

“With these bodies!” cried Spiagudry, beginning to tremble again. “But you cannot see them, my lord.”

“What! I cannot see bodies which are put here for no other purpose than to be seen? I tell you again that I have some questions to ask you concerning one of them, and it is your duty to answer them. Obey me voluntarily, old man, or you will obey me perforce.”

Spiagudry had a profound respect for swords, and he saw one glistening by Ordener’s side.

“*Nihil non arrogat armis*,” he muttered, and, fumbling with his bunch of keys, he opened the gate in the grating, and admitted the stranger to the rear section of the apartment.

“Show me the captain’s clothes,” said the latter.

At that moment the light from the lamp fell upon Gill Stadt’s bleeding head.

“Great God! cried Ordener, “what unspeakable profanation!”

“Great St. Hospitius, have mercy on me!” muttered the old keeper.

“Old man,” continued Ordener in a threatening tone, “are you so far from the tomb that you can afford to forget the respect due to it, and are you

not afraid, guilty wretch, that the living will teach you what you owe to the dead?"

"Mercy! mercy!" cried the old man, "it was not I! If you but knew!" He checked himself, for he remembered the little man's words, 'Be faithful and discreet.' "Did you see any one pass out through the opening above?" he asked almost inaudibly.

"I did. Was it your accomplice?"

"No; he is the culprit, the only culprit! I swear it by all the curses of hell and by all the blessings of heaven; by this very body so foully desecrated!" And he grovelled on the stone at Ordener's feet.

Hideous as Spiagudry was to look upon, there was nevertheless in his desperate protestations an accent of sincerity which convinced the young man of the truth of what he said.

"Get up, old man," he said; "and if you have not outraged the dead, do not degrade old age."

Spiagudry rose, and Ordener continued:—

"Who is the guilty man?"

"Oh! hush, noble young sir; you know not of whom you are speaking! Hush!"

And Spiagudry repeated to himself, "Be faithful and discreet."

"Who is the guilty man?" Ordener repeated sternly; "I must know his name."

"In Heaven's name, my lord, do not say so! Be silent, for fear—"

"Fear will not keep me silent, and it will make you speak."

"Excuse me, forgive me, my young master," stammered Spiagudry, in despair, "but I cannot."

“You can, for I will have you. You will give me the name of this desecrator of the dead.”

Still Spiagudry tried to evade the question.

“Very well, my noble master! the desecrator of this body is the murderer of this officer.”

“So the officer was murdered, was he?” asked Ordener, reminded by this transition of the object of his visit.

“Yes, my lord, to be sure.”

“By whom? By whom?”

“In the name of the saint whom your mother invoked when she gave you birth, do not seek to learn his name, my young master; do not force me to reveal it.”

“If my interest in knowing needed to be spurred on, old man, you would do it, by adding curiosity to it. I command you to give me the murderer’s name.”

“Very well,” said Spiagudry, “just notice these deep lacerations made by long, sharp nails upon the poor fellow’s body. They will tell you the name you want.”

“Why! was it some wild beast?” said Ordener.

“No, my lord.”

“But, unless it was the devil —”

“Hush! take care that you don’t guess too well. Have you never heard,” continued the keeper, in a whisper, “of a man, or a monster with a human face, whose nails are as long as those of Astaroth, who destroyed us, or of the Antichrist, who will eventually destroy us?”

“Speak more plainly.”

“‘Woe!’ says the Apocalypse —”

"The assassin's name is what I must have."

"The assassin — his name? Oh, my lord, have pity upon me, and upon yourself!"

"The second part of your entreaty would destroy the first, even if weighty reasons did not compel me to drag the name from you. Do not trifle with me any more —"

"Then if you will have it, young man," said Spiagudry, standing erect, and speaking in a loud voice, "this murderer and desecrator is Hans of Iceland."

This awe-inspiring name was not unknown to Ordener.

"What!" he exclaimed. "Hans! that execrable bandit!"

"Do not call him a bandit, for he always lives alone."

Then how do you know him, villain? What joint crimes bind you together?"

"Oh! my noble master, deign not to trust to appearances. Is the trunk of the oak poisonous because the serpent takes shelter there?"

"No more senseless talk! a criminal can have no friends save his confederates."

"I am not his friend, still less his confederate; and if my oaths do not convince you, my lord, consider in God's name, that this act of profanation will render me liable, when they come to take away Gill Stadt's body, within twenty-four hours, to the punishment meted out to those who are guilty of sacrilege, and for that reason now causes me the most terrible anxiety which an innocent man ever suffered."

This argument, based upon his personal interest in the matter, had more effect upon Ordener than the poor keeper's supplicating voice ; it was doubtless the main inspiration of his pathetic, though fruitless resistance to the little man's abhorrent deed. Ordener reflected a moment, while Spiagudry sought to read upon his features whether the period of repose would be followed by a permanent calm or a renewal of the tempest.

At last he said, sternly but without excitement : —

“ Old man, be truthful. Did you find any papers upon this officer ? ”

“ None, upon my honor.”

“ Do you know whether Hans of Iceland found any ? ”

“ I swear by St. Hospitius that I do not know.”

“ You do not know ? Do you know this Hans' hiding-place ? ”

“ He never hides, he is always wandering about.”

“ Very well ; where are his haunts ? ”

“ The heathen,” the old man replied beneath his breath, “ has as many haunts as the island of Hitteren has reefs, or as Sirius has rays.”

“ I ask you once more,” Ordener broke in, “ to speak in plain words. I will set you an example ; listen. You are mysteriously connected with a brigand, whose accomplice you insist that you are not. As you know him, you must know where he is now to be found. Do not interrupt me. If you are not his confederate, you can have no hesitation about guiding me to his haunt.”

Spiagudry could not contain his terror.

“You, noble sir! Great God! — you, so full of life and vigor, seek out that demon and provoke him! When Ingiald with the four arms fought the giant Nyctolm, he had at least his four arms.”

“Well,” said Ordener, with a smile, “if four arms are needed, am I not to have you for my guide?”

“I your guide! How can you make fun of a poor old man who almost needs a guide himself?”

“Listen,” rejoined Ordener: “do not you try to make fun of me. If this act of profanation, of which I should be very glad to believe you guiltless, exposes you to punishment for sacrilege, you cannot remain here; therefore you must fly. I offer you my protection, but only on the condition that you guide me to this brigand’s haunt. Be my guide, and I will be your protector. I will go even farther than that: if I put my hands on Hans of Iceland I will bring him here, dead or alive. You can then prove your innocence, and I will undertake to have you reinstated in your office. Meanwhile, here are more royal crowns than it will bring you in a year.”

Ordener in his arguments had observed the order prescribed by the laws of logic, and had kept the purse till the last. The earlier ones, however, were forcible enough to give Spiagudry much food for thought. He began by taking the money.

“Noble master, you are right,” he said after a moment, and his eye, which had wandered aimlessly about until then, met Ordener’s. “If I go with you, I shall one day feel the vengeance of the remorseless Hans; if I stay here, I shall fall into the hands of Orugix, the executioner, to-morrow. What is the

punishment for sacrilege? It matters not. In either case my poor life is in danger. But, as Sæmond Sigfusson, otherwise called the Sage, has justly observed, *Inter duo pericula æqualia minus imminens eligendum est* ;¹ and so I will go with you. Yes, my lord, I will be your guide. Be good enough to remember, however, that I have done my best to induce you to forego your hazardous purpose."

"Very good," said Ordener. "You will be my guide, then. Old man," he added with a look full of meaning, "I rely upon your loyalty."

"Ah! master, Spiagudry's word is as pure as the gold you just gave me so generously."

"See to it that it proves to be so; otherwise I will show you that the sword I wear is of as good quality as my gold. Where do you imagine that Hans of Iceland is?"

"As the southern part of Drontheimhus is full of troops, sent there upon some order from the grand chancellor, Hans probably made for the cave of Walderhog, or the lake of Siniasen. Our road lies by Skongen."

"When can you go with me?"

"When the day which is just beginning has passed, when the darkness has come and the Spladgest is closed, your poor servant will assume the duties of guide, and will cease to lavish his attentions upon the dead. We will find a way to conceal the mutilation of the miner from the eyes of the people during the day."

"Where shall I find you this evening?"

¹ Of two equal risks, the less imminent is to be preferred.

“On the public square of Drontheim, if convenient to you, near the statue of Justice, formerly of Freya, which will doubtless shelter me in its shadow in gratitude to me for having carved such a fine devil under its feet.”

It is probable that Spiagudry would have gone on to repeat word for word the inducements of his petition to the governor, had not Ordener interrupted him.

“I will be there, old man; the bargain is concluded.”

“Concluded;” the keeper echoed the word.

As it left his lips, they heard a sort of rumbling noise, apparently over their heads.

The keeper started.

“What’s that?” he said.

“Is there any other living occupant of this building than yourself?” asked Ordener, equally surprised.

“You remind me of my assistant, Oglypiglap,” said Spiagudry, reassured by the thought; “it’s he snoring, of course. A sleeping Laplander, according to Bishop Arngrim, makes as much noise as a woman when she’s awake.”

As he spoke they were walking toward the outer door. Spiagudry opened it softly.

“Good-night, my young sir,” he said; “may Heaven be good to you, until this evening. If your road takes you by the cross of St. Hospitius, deign to pray for your wretched servant Benignus Spiagudry.”

Thereupon he closed the door hurriedly, as well from fear of being seen as to protect his lamp from the early morning breeze, and returned to Gill’s body, where he busied himself in so arranging the head as to conceal the opening.

Many weighty motives were required to induce the timid keeper to accept the hazardous offer of the stranger. They were : (1) the fear of Ordener present ; (2) the fear of Orugix the executioner ; (3) an old grudge against Hans of Iceland, which he hardly dared admit to himself, so enslaved was he by his fear of this man ; (4) his love for science, to which the journey might prove so useful ; (5) his confidence in his ability to keep out of Hans' sight ; (6) a speculative attraction for certain metal contained in the young adventurer's purse, and with which the iron box stolen from the captain and destined for the widow Stadt seemed to be filled. That same box, by the way, was now in great danger of never leaving the custody of the messenger. The last motive was his hope, well or ill-founded, of recovering, sooner or later, the office he was about to abandon. Besides, what mattered it to him whether the brigand slew the traveller, or the traveller the brigand ? At this point in his revery, he unthinkingly said aloud :

“ In either case it will make a body for me ! ”

The rumbling noise was repeated, and the unhappy keeper shuddered.

“ That is n't really Oglypiglap snoring,” he said ;
“ that noise comes from outside.”

After a moment's reflection, —

“ I am a great fool to be frightened so easily ; doubtless it's some dog baying at the moon.”

He finished arranging Gill Stadt's disfigured limbs ; then closed all the doors, and threw himself upon his pallet, to rest from the fatigue of the night which was past, and gather strength for that which was to come.

IX.

Juliet. O, think'st thou we shall ever meet again?

Romeo. I doubt it not ; and all these woes shall serve
For sweet discourses in our time to come.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE beacon of Munckholm had been extinguished, and, in its place, the sailor coming up Drontheim Fiord could see the helmet of the sentinel shining like a moving star, in the rays of the rising sun, when Schumacker, leaning on his daughter's arm, went down as usual into the circular garden which surrounded his prison. It had been a trying night for the old man, who had not slept at all ; and the young girl's slumber had been broken by happy dreams. For some time they walked back and forth without speaking, but at last Schumacker said with a grave, sad glance at his lovely daughter : —

“ You are blushing and smiling to yourself, Ethel ; ah ! you are happy, indeed, for you have not to blush for your past, and you smile when you think of the future.”

Ethel blushed more vividly than before, and ceased to smile.

“ My lord and father,” she said, deeply embarrassed, “ I have brought the Edda.”

“ Very well, read to me, my daughter ; and Schumacker fell to musing again. Sitting upon a flat rock, beneath the shade of a black fir, the prisoner listened to his daughter’s melodious voice, without hearing a word that she read, as a weary traveller listens contentedly to the murmuring streamlet whence he draws new life and strength.

Ethel read the story of the shepherdess Allanga, who refused the hand of a king until he proved to her that he was a gallant warrior. Prince Regner Lodbrog sued in vain for the hand of the lovely shepherdess until he returned victorious from his combat with the brigand of Klipstadur, Ingolphus the Exterminator.

Suddenly the sound of approaching footsteps and rustling leaves interrupted the reading, and aroused Schumacker from his meditation. Lieutenant Ahlefeld came out from behind the rock on which they were sitting. Ethel hung her head as she recognized the everlasting interloper, who at once addressed her : —

“ Faith, my fair maiden, I just overheard the name of Ingolphus the Exterminator pronounced by your lovely lips. I presume that you were led to speak of him in connection with his worthy descendant, Hans of Iceland. Young ladies delight to talk about brigands. By the way, stories are told of Ingolphus and his descendants, which are singularly fascinating, and at the same time terrifying. The Exterminator had but one son, born of the sorceress Thoarka ; that son also had one son, and his mother was a sorceress, too. For four centuries

the race has been perpetuated, to the endless misery of Iceland, but always by but one offshoot of the same generation. Through this extraordinary line of heirs, the infernal genius of Ingolphus has come down to our own day, and now exists in all its glory in the person of the famous Hans of Iceland, who doubtless had but now the honor of filling a place in the virginal thoughts of my fair friend."

The officer paused for a moment: Ethel maintained an embarrassed silence, and Schumacker was evidently bored. Delighted to find them disposed to listen, if not to reply, he continued :—

"The brigand of Klipstadur's only passion is hatred of mankind ; his only object in life to destroy his fellow-men."

"He is wise," interposed the old man, harshly.

"He always lives alone," said the lieutenant.

"He is fortunate," said Schumacker.

The lieutenant was charmed by these interruptions, which seemed to make the old man a party to a contract to converse.

"May the god Mithra preserve us," he cried, "from such wisdom and such good fortune! Cursed be the malevolent zephyr which brought this last of the demons of Iceland to our Norwegian shore! I was wrong to say malevolent, for it is said that we are indebted to a bishop for the happiness of possessing Hans of Klipstadur. If tradition is to be believed, certain Icelandic peasants found Hans, when he was a small child, on the mountains of Bessestedt, and proposed to kill him, as Astyages killed the lion's whelp of Bactriana. But the Bishop of Scalholt

remonstrated, and took the cub under his protection, hoping to make a Christian of the devil. The good bishop resorted to every possible means to develop his infernal intellect, forgetting that the hemlock would not change to a lily in the hot-houses of Babylon. And so the demoniac youth rewarded him for his pains by taking flight one fine night across the sea on a tree-trunk, having first set fire to the Episcopal manor-house to give him light for his voyage. According to the old gossips hereabouts, that is how this Icelfander came to Norway. His education makes him the beau ideal of a monster of wickedness. Since then the presence of this incarnate Ahrimanes in Drontheimhus has been attested by divers fiendish exploits, — the mines of Fa-roer overflowed, and three hundred workmen buried in the ruins; the hanging rock of Golyn hurled down during the night upon the village which it overhung; the bridge of Half-Broën at the summit of the cliffs giving way under the feet of those passing over it; the cathedral of Drontheim burned; the beacons on the coast extinguished during stormy nights; and a vast number of crimes and murders buried in the lakes of Sparbo and Smiasen, or hidden in the caves of Walderhog and Ryllass and the gorges of the Dofre-Fjeld. The old women say that a new hair grows in his beard with every crime; in that case his beard should be as bushy as that of the most venerable of Assyrian magi. My lovely friend knows perhaps that the governor has tried more than once to check the luxuriant growth of this beard."

Again Schumacker interrupted the monologue.

“And all their efforts to get hold of the man,” he said triumphantly, and with a satirical smile, “have failed? I congratulate the grand chancellor’s department.”

The officer did not understand the sarcasm of the ex-grand-chancellor.

“Hitherto,” he resumed, “Hans has been as unconquerable as Horatius Cocles. Old soldiers, young militiamen, countrymen, mountaineers, — they all die, or fly before him. He is a demon whom it seems impossible either to avoid or to attack; the best possible fortune for those who seek him is to fail to find him.”

“You are surprised perhaps, fair maiden,” he continued, taking a seat familiarly beside Ethel, who drew closer to her father, “that I have such wealth of interesting information concerning this supernatural being. I have had a definite purpose in collecting these extraordinary traditions. It seems to me, and I should be very happy to know that my charming friend is of my opinion, that the adventures of Hans might be made the groundwork of a delightful novel, after the manner of the sublime works of Mademoiselle de Scudéry, ‘*Artamène*,’ or ‘*Clélie*,’ of which I have read as yet only six volumes, but which is in my eyes a masterpiece. It would be necessary, however, to soften our climate, embellish our traditions, and modify our barbarous nomenclature. Drontheim, for instance, which would become *Dur-tinianum*, would see its forests transformed by my magic wand to lovely sylvan glades, watered by a

thousand gurgling streams, far more poetic than our unsightly torrents. Our deep, dark caves would give place to fascinating grottos, carpeted with moss-grown rock-work, and strewn with lovely shells. In one of these grottos should dwell a famous wizard, *Hannus of Thule*, — for you will agree that the name ‘Hans of Iceland’ does not charm the ear. This giant — you understand, of course, that it would be absurd that the hero of such a work should not be a giant — this giant should be descended in the direct line from the god Mars (Ingolphus does not impress the imagination) and the enchantress *Theonne* (do you not think the name of Thoarka much changed for the better?), daughter of the Cumæan sibyl. Hannus is brought up by the grand magus of Thule, and subsequently makes his escape from the pontiff’s palace in a chariot drawn by two dragons. It would be a paltry imagination which would retain the wretched tradition of the tree-trunk. He reaches Durtinium, and is so attracted by that beautiful country that he makes it his place of residence, and the scene of his crimes. It will be no easy matter to represent Hans’ various acts of brigandage in an agreeable light. The horror of them must be relieved by ingeniously working in a love story. The shepherdess Alcippe, tending her flock one day in a grove of myrtle and olive, is spied by the giant, who succumbs at once to the power of her eyes. But Alcippe loves Lycidas, the handsome officer of a militia regiment garrisoned in her village. The giant is indignant at the soldier’s good fortune, and the soldier at the giant’s attentions. You can imagine

for yourself, fair maiden, how great a charm could be imparted even to the adventures of Hannus by some such fancy as that. I would stake my Cracow boots against a pair of pattens that such a subject in the hands of Mademoiselle Scudéry would drive all the ladies of Copenhagen wild with delight."

The word "Copenhagen" aroused Schumacker from the fit of gloomy abstraction in which he had been buried during the whole of this wasted display of wit by the lieutenant.

"Copenhagen?" he exclaimed abruptly; "Master Officer, what is the news from Copenhagen?"

"Nothing, upon my word, so far as my knowledge goes, except that the king has consented to the marriage which is at present the principal subject of interest in the two kingdoms."

"What marriage is that?"

The appearance of a fourth person upon the scene arrested the lieutenant's reply upon his lips.

All three raised their eyes. The sombre countenance of the prisoner lighted up, the vapid features of the lieutenant assumed a grave expression, and Ethel's sweet face, which was pale and unquiet throughout Ahlefeld's long soliloquy, became animated and joyous. She drew a long breath as if her heart had been relieved from an intolerable weight, and greeted the new-comer with a smile.

It was Ordener.

The old prisoner, his daughter, and the lieutenant were singularly situated with regard to Ordener, in that each of them had a secret understanding with him; and each of them accordingly wished the others

out of the way. His return did not surprise Schumacker or Ethel, for they expected him ; but Ahlefeld was as much surprised to see him as he was to see Ahlefeld. He might have feared some indiscretion on the part of the lieutenant with reference to the scene of the night before, had it not been for the fact that the unwritten law governing such matters strictly enjoined silence. He could not but wonder, however, to see him sitting peaceably beside the two prisoners.

Precisely because these four persons had so much to say to each other apart, they could find nothing to say when they were all together ; consequently not a word of welcome was spoken to Ordener, and he was greeted only by looks of intelligence and embarrassment.

The lieutenant burst out laughing.

“By the tail of the king’s coat, my dear newcomer, this silence is not unlike that of the senators of Gaul when the Roman Brennus — upon my honor, I don’t know which was the Roman and which the Gaul — but no matter ; since you are here, help me to tell our venerable friend the news. At the time of your sudden appearance on the scene I was just speaking of the marriage in high life which fills the thoughts of the Medes and Persians at the present time.”

“What marriage ?” Schumacker and Ordener asked in the same breath.

“From the cut of your clothes, Master Stranger,” cried the lieutenant, striking his hands together, “I had already made up my mind that you come from

some other world, and that question changes my suspicion to certainty. You must have landed yesterday on the banks of the Nidder from a fairy chariot, drawn by winged dragons; for you cannot have travelled in Norway without hearing of the proposed marriage of the viceroy's son with the grand chancellor's daughter."

Schumacker turned toward the speaker.

"What! Ordener Guldenlew is to wed Ulrica von Ahlefeld?"

"As you say," the officer replied; "and the marriage will be solemnized before the fashion of farthingales *à la française* reaches Copenhagen."

"Frederic's son must be about twenty-two years old, for I had been a year in the fortress at Copenhagen when I heard of his birth. Let him marry young," continued Schumacker, with a bitter smile; "when disgrace comes upon him they will not reproach him for having fixed his ambitious gaze upon a cardinal's hat."

The former favorite here made an allusion to his own misfortunes, which the lieutenant did not understand.

"No, certainly not," he said with an outburst of merriment. "Baron Ordener is to receive the title of count, the collar of the Elephant, and a colonel's epaulets, all of which do not consist very well with the berretta of a cardinal."

"So much the better," Schumacker rejoined. After a pause he added, shaking his head as if his revenge were in sight: "Some day, perhaps, they will use his fine collar for an instrument to torture

him withal, break his count's coronet on his head, and box his ears with his epaulets."

Ordener grasped the old man's hand.

"For your very hate's sake, my lord, do not rail at your enemy's good fortune until you know that he esteems it such."

"Bah!" exclaimed the lieutenant; "what the devil do the good man's anathemas matter to the Baron von Thorwick?"

"Lieutenant!" cried Ordener, "they matter more to him than you think, perhaps. And this famous marriage of yours," he continued after a moment's pause, "is less certain to come off than you seem to imagine."

"*Fiat quod vis*," retorted Ahlefeld with an ironical bow. "The king, viceroy, and grand chancellor have arranged all the preliminaries, it is true; they desire it, and propose that it shall be; but since it is displeasing to Herr Stranger here, of what consequence are grand chancellor, viceroy, and king?"

"You may be right," said Ordener, seriously.

"Oh! upon my word!" — and the lieutenant laughed so heartily that he lost his balance and fell backward — "that is too good. I would give worlds if the Baron von Thorwick were only present to hear a seer so well informed as to the affairs of this world decide his fate. My learned prophet, my word for it, you have n't beard enough to make a successful wizard."

"Herr Lieutenant," said Ordener, coldly, "I do not believe that Ordener Guldenlew would marry a woman whom he did not love."

“ Well, well ! behold the Book of Maxims ! Pray, who told you, my knight of the green cloak, that the baron does not love Ulrica von Ahlefeld ? ”

“ Pray, who told you that he does love her ? ”

At this the lieutenant was led on, as often happens in the heat of conversation, to affirm a fact of which he was not sure.

“ Who told me that he loves her ? that ’s an amusing question ! I am very sorry for your powers of divination. Why, everybody knows that it is as much a love match as a marriage for convenience.”

“ Except myself, at least,” said Ordener, with the utmost gravity.

“ Except yourself, if you choose ; but what matters that ? Your ignorance does not prevent the viceroy’s son from being in love with the chancellor’s daughter.”

“ In love with her ? ”

“ Madly in love ! ”

“ He must be mad indeed to be in love with her.”

“ Zounds, sir, do not forget of whom and to whom you are speaking. Would not one say that the son of Count Guldenlew was entitled to fall in love with a lady without consulting this bumpkin ? ”

The lieutenant rose as he spoke, and Ethel, who saw that Ordener’s face was beginning to flush angrily, rushed in front of him.

“ In pity’s name, be calm,” she said ; “ don’t mind his insults. After all, what care we whether the viceroy’s son loves the chancellor’s daughter ? ”

The touch of her soft hand appeased the tempest in the young man’s heart ; he looked passionately

down into Ethel's face, and paid no further attention to the lieutenant, who recovered his good humor, and remarked : —

“The young lady plays with infinite charm the rôle of the Sabine women between their fathers and their husbands. I spoke too hastily, I forgot for the moment,” he continued, addressing Ordener, “that there is a bond of union between us, and that we cannot now insult each other. Chevalier, give me your hand. Confess that you too forgot that you were speaking of the viceroy's son to his future brother-in-law, Lieutenant von Ahlefeld.”

At the last word, Schumacker, who had hitherto been an indifferent, or perhaps impatient spectator of what was taking place, leaped from his stone seat with a terrible cry.

“Ahlefeld! an Ahlefeld in my presence! Serpent! how did I fail to recognize the detestable father in the son? Leave me in peace in my dungeon; I was not sentenced to undergo the punishment of seeing you. The only thing lacking is to see the son of Guldenlew beside the son of Ahlefeld, as he dared to wish just now! Traitors, cowards! why do they not come themselves to gloat over my tears of madness and rage? Abhorred, detested race! Son of Ahlefeld, begone!”

The lieutenant, who was bewildered at first by the torrent of imprecation, soon recovered his speech and with it his anger rose.

“Silence! old fool! will you not soon have done with your devil's litany?”

“Begone, begone!” repeated the old man, “and

take my curse with you, — my curse upon your race, and the miserable race of Guldenlew which is soon to be allied with yours ! ”

“ By God ! ” cried Ahlefeld, in a furious rage, “ you put a twofold insult upon me ! ”

He was quite beside himself with passion, and Ordener laid a restraining hand upon his arm.

“ Respect gray hairs even in your enemy, lieutenant,” he said ; “ we already have one account to settle, and I will answer to you for the prisoner’s words.”

“ So be it,” said the lieutenant ; “ you are assuming a double obligation. It will be a fight to the death, for I shall have my brother-in-law to avenge as well as myself. Remember that when you pick up my glove you pick up Ordener Guldenlew’s as well.”

“ Lieutenant Ahlefeld,” Ordener rejoined, “ you take up the cause of the absent with a warmth which indicates a generous nature. Would it not be equally generous to show some compassion for an unfortunate old man, to whom adversity gives the right to be unjust ? ”

Ahlefeld’s was one of those hearts in which praise arouses all the better instincts. He pressed Ordener’s hand, and went up to Schumacker, who was utterly exhausted by his violent outburst, and had fallen back upon the stone in the arms of the weeping Ethel.

“ Herr Schumacker,” he said, “ you took an unfair advantage of your advanced age, and I perhaps should have taken an equally unfair advantage of

my youth, had you not found a champion. I entered your prison this morning for the last time, for I came to inform you that henceforth, in accordance with the viceroy's special orders, you are to be left without guards, and free to go where you please in the donjon. Deign to receive this good news from the lips of an enemy."

"Be good enough to withdraw," said the aged prisoner, in a stifled voice.

The lieutenant bowed and complied, well pleased at heart to have won an approving glance from Ordener.

Schumacker sat for some time with folded arms and bowed head, absorbed in his thoughts; suddenly he looked up at Ordener, who was standing silently in front of him.

"Well?" he said, inquiringly.

"Dispolsen was murdered, count."

The old man's head fell back upon his chest. Ordener continued:—

"He was murdered by a famous brigand, Hans of Iceland."

"Hans of Iceland!" said Schumacker.

"Hans of Iceland!" repeated Ethel.

"He robbed the captain," said Ordener.

"Then you heard nothing of an iron casket, sealed with the arms of Griffenfeld?"

"No, my lord."

Schumacker buried his face in his hands.

"I will bring it back to you, my lord, trust me for that. The murder was committed yesterday morning; Hans has fled northward. I have secured a

guide who knows his haunts, and I am familiar with the mountains of Drontheimhus. I will find the brigand."

Ethel turned pale as death. Schumaker rose with a joyous light in his eyes, as if in recognition of the fact that virtue still existed among men.

"Noble Ordener," he said, "farewell;" and raising his hand heavenward, he disappeared behind the shrubbery.

When Ordener turned around he saw Ethel, with colorless cheeks, sitting upon the moss-grown rock like an alabaster statue upon a black pedestal.

"Just God, my Ethel!" he cried, rushing to her side and clasping her in his arms, "what is the matter?"

"Oh! if you have, I will not say any affection, but any pity for me," replied the trembling girl, in a voice which he could barely hear; "if what you said to me yesterday was not intended to deceive me; if your purpose in coming to this prison was not to cause my death; oh! Ordener, my Ordener, in the name of Heaven, in the name of all the angels, abandon your mad project! Ordener, my beloved Ordener," she went on—and her tears flowed in rivers, and her head was resting against the young man's breast—"make this sacrifice for me. Do not pursue this brigand, this awful demon, whom you intend to do battle with. In whose interest do you do it, Ordener? Tell me, whose interests have you more at heart than those of the poor girl whom you called but yesterday your beloved wife?"

She stopped, choked by her sobs. Her arms were

about Ordener's neck, and her suppliant eyes were gazing into his.

"My adored Ethel, you are alarmed at nothing. God gives his support to praiseworthy undertakings, and no other interest is so much at stake as yours in my adventure. This iron casket contains —"

"My interest! have I any other interest than your safety? If you should die, Ordener, what do you think would become of me?"

"Why do you think that I shall die, Ethel?"

"Ah! you cannot know this Hans, this devil incarnate. Do you know what sort of a monster you propose to hunt? Do you know that he has all the powers of darkness at his beck and call; that he overturns mountains upon towns; that his step causes underground caverns to fall in; that his breath extinguishes the beacons upon the cliffs? And do you think, Ordener, that you can contend against this devil-aided giant, with your slender arms and your frail sword?"

"But will your prayers avail me nothing, Ethel, and the thought that I am fighting for you? Be sure, my Ethel, that you have heard exaggerated accounts of the strength and power of this rascal. He is a man like the rest of us, who deals out death until somebody deals it out to him."

"Then you will not listen to me? Do my words go for nothing with you? What will become of me, in God's name, if you leave me thus, to wander from one danger to another, risking your life, which belongs to me, and putting it at the mercy of a monster for some paltry worldly interest?"

The lieutenant's fables here came to Ethel's mind once more, made more blood-curdling than ever by her love and her terror. She went on, in a voice broken by sobs:—

“I assure you, my beloved Ordener, that they deceived you who told you that he was nothing more than a man. You should believe me in preference to them, Ordener, for you know that I would not deceive you. A thousand times they have tried to overcome him, and he has destroyed whole battalions. I wish others would tell you so; you would believe them, and then you would not go.”

Ethel's entreaties would doubtless have shaken Ordener's venturesome resolution if his preparations had been less far advanced. The words which Schumacker let fall in his despair the night before came to his mind, and strengthened his resolution.

“I might, dearest Ethel, tell you that I would not go, and still carry out my purpose; but I will never deceive you, even for the sake of allaying your fears. I cannot, I say again, hesitate between your tears and your true interest. Your fortune, your happiness, perhaps your very life are at stake,—your life, my Ethel.”

He drew her closer to him as he spoke.

“What are all those to me?” she cried, weeping bitterly. “My Ordener, my love, my joy—you know that you are my only joy—do not impose an inevitable, terrible misfortune upon me, in order to avoid trifling and doubtful ills. What are my fortune and my life to me?”

“Your father's life also is at stake, Ethel?”

She extricated herself from his arms.

"My father's life?" she repeated beneath her breath, as the color fled from her cheeks.

"Yes, Ethel. This miscreant, hired without doubt by Count von Griffenfeld's foes, has in his possession certain papers, the loss of which endangers your father's life, which is a constant menace to so many. I propose to take these papers from him, and his life with them."

Ethel sat for some moments pale and mute; her tears had ceased to flow, her breath was labored, and she gazed listlessly at the ground, like a condemned man when the axe is raised above his head.

"My father's life!" she murmured.

Then she slowly raised her eyes to Ordener's.

"What you propose to do is useless," she said: "but do it."

Ordener strained her to his heart.

"Oh! my noble girl, let your heart beat against mine. My brave, generous love, I will soon return. Then you will be truly mine. I mean to be your father's savior, in order to deserve to be his son. My own, my best beloved Ethel!"

Who can say what emotions fill a noble heart which feels that its every thought is understood and responded to by another noble heart? And when love unites two such hearts with its indissoluble bond who can describe their indescribable bliss? At such time it seems as if one experienced all the happiness and glory that life can possibly contain, compressed in one short moment, and heightened by the consciousness of generous sacrifice.

“Oh, my Ordener, go, and if you do not return, hopeless grief will kill me. I have that consolation.”

They rose together, and Ordener placed Ethel's arm within his own, and took her hand in his ; thus they walked silently through the winding paths of the dark garden, and came at last regretfully to the door in the tower, which gave egress therefrom. Then Ethel drew a tiny pair of golden scissors, and cut a lock of her luxuriant black hair.

“Take this, Ordener,” said she ; “let it, more fortunate than I, go with you wherever you go.”

Ordener pressed it fervently to his lips.

“Think of me, Ordener,” she continued, “and I will pray for you. My prayers, perhaps, will be as potent with God as your weapons against the demon.”

Ordener bent his head ; his heart was too full for utterance. They stood some time, heart to heart. At the moment of parting, perhaps forever, Ordener enjoyed, with melancholy ecstasy, the happiness of holding his Ethel once more in his arms. At last, he imprinted a long, chaste kiss upon the lovely girl's pallid forehead, and darted hastily into the darkness up the winding staircase, whence, a moment later, came back the sad, sweet word, “Adieu !”

X.

Thou would'st not deem her wretched ; outward eyes
Would hail her happy.
They 've decked her form in purple and in pall ;
When she goes forth, the thronging vassals kneel,
And bending pages bear her footcloth well ;
No eye beholds that lady in her bower, —
That is *her* hour of joy, for then she weeps,
Nor does her husband hear.

.
I am that wretch,
The wife of a most noble, honored lord,
The mother of a babe whose smiles do stab me.

MATURIN : *Bertram.*

COUNTESS von Ahlefeld, after a long, sleepless night, had begun a long, sleepless day. Half reclining upon a sofa, she was musing upon the bitter after-taste of impure pleasures, upon the crime which wears the life away in joyless sensuality, ending in inconsolable sorrow. She was thinking of Musdœmon, whom her guilty illusions made appear so fascinating to her in the old days, but who was so abhorrent to her, now that she had penetrated through his outer covering to the heart beneath. The wretched creature was weeping, not because she had been deceived, but because her powers of self-deception were at an end ; her tears were tears of regret and not of repentance, so they brought her no relief. Suddenly her door opened ; she hastily wiped her eyes, and turned around in much irritation,

for she had given orders that she was to be left alone. Her anger changed, at the sight of Musdœmon, to terror, which was somewhat allayed when she saw that he was accompanied by her son Frederic.

“Mother!” cried the lieutenant, “how came you here? I thought you were at Bergen. Have our fair dames adopted the fashion of roaming about over the country?”

The countess greeted Frederic with effusive caresses, to which, like all spoiled children, he responded coldly enough. That was perhaps the keenest of all possible punishments for the unhappy woman. Frederic was her beloved son, the only being in the world for whom she felt real, unselfish affection; it often happens that there remains something of the mother in a fallen woman, even when the wife has ceased to exist.

“I see, my son, that you came at once to see me, as soon as you knew that I was at Drontheim.”

“Oh dear, no. I was horribly bored, so I came into the city, where I met Musdœmon, and he brought me here.”

The poor mother sighed heavily.

“By the way, mother,” said Frederic, “I am very glad to see you. You can tell me if knots of red ribbon at the bottom of the doublet are still in style at Copenhagen. Did you think to bring me a bottle of the oil of Jouvence, which whitens the skin? You didn’t forget, did you, the translation of the last French novel, nor the gold lace for my flame-colored cloak, nor the little combs which they put under the curls to hold up the buckles, nor —”

The poor woman had brought him nothing except all the love that she had in the world.

"I have been ill, my dear son," she said, "and I suffered so that I forgot what you wanted."

"You have been ill, mother? You are better now, are n't you? By the way, how does my pack of Norman hounds come on? I'll wager that they have forgotten to bathe my monkey in rose-water every day. You will see that I shall find my Bilbao parrot dead when I return. When I am away nobody thinks of my pets."

"Your mother thinks of you, my son, at all events," said the countess, in a trembling voice.

If it had been the fatal hour when the destroying angel shall cast the souls of sinners into the bottomless pit of everlasting damnation, he would have been moved to pity by the anguish which pierced the wretched mother's heart at that moment.

Musdæmon was laughing to himself in a corner of the room.

"Master Frederic," he said, "I see that the steel blade does not propose to rust in the iron scabbard. You have no idea of getting out of touch with the healthy traditions of the salons of Copenhagen in the towers of Munckholm. And yet, pray tell me, of what use are the oil of Jouvence, the red ribbons, the little combs, and all this siege apparatus, if the only feminine fortress within Munckholm towers is impregnable?"

"On my honor, it is," Frederic rejoined with a laugh. "Certain it is that where I have failed, General Schack himself would fail. But how can

you surprise a fort where nothing is left exposed, where there is not the slightest relaxation of watchfulness? What is to be done in the face of chemisettes which show nothing but the neck, and sleeves which hide the whole arm, so that there is nothing but the face and hands to show that the young woman is not as black as the Emperor of Mauritania? My dear preceptor, you would be no better than a pupil yourself. Believe me, the fort is impregnable when Modesty commands the garrison."

"Upon my word!" sneered Musdœmon. "Why not compel Modesty to surrender by sending Love to lead an assault, instead of confining operations to a blockade under the leadership of Trifling Attentions?"

"Trouble thrown away, my friend. Love has already made his way into the citadel, but he brought re-enforcements to Modesty."

"Ah! my dear Frederic, that is news indeed. With Love on your side —"

"Who said that he is on my side, Musdœmon?"

"On whose side is he, then?" cried Musdœmon and the countess simultaneously. Up to that time she had listened in silence, but the lieutenant's words reminded her of Ordener.

Frederic was on the point of replying, and had at his tongue's end an entertaining account of the midnight scene of the preceding night, when he remembered that the law of chivalry enjoined silence upon him, and his jocose humor changed to embarrassment.

"I' faith," he stammered, "I can't say on whose — but — some clodhopper perhaps — some — some vassal —"

"Some soldier of the garrison?" suggested Musdœmon, laughing heartily.

"What, my son!" cried the countess; "you are sure that she loves a peasant, a vassal? What good luck, if you are sure!"

"God! yes, I am sure of it. It's not a soldier of the garrison," the lieutenant added with a piqued expression. "But I am sufficiently sure of what I say, mother, to beg you to shorten my useless exile in that cursed castle."

The countess's face brightened perceptibly when she learned of the young girl's fall. Ordener Guldenlew's haste to visit Munckholm thereupon appeared to her mind in a very different light, and she attributed the honor of it to her son.

"You must give us the details of Ethel Schumacker's love affairs, Frederic," she said; "they do not surprise me, for the daughter of a rustic could love none but a rustic. However, you should not curse the castle, which was the means of a certain personage's taking the first steps toward forming your acquaintance yesterday."

"What's that, mother?" and the lieutenant opened his eyes. "What personage?"

"A truce to your jokes, my son. Did no one pay you a visit yesterday? You see that I know all about it."

"Faith, you know more than I, mother. Deuce take me if I saw anybody but the masks under the cornices of the old towers."

"What, Frederic! you saw no one?"

"No one, mother, upon my word!"

NO!!

In omitting to mention his antagonist of the donjon, Frederic was complying with the law of silence ; and then, besides, that clown did not count.

“ Do you mean to say that the viceroy’s son did n’t go to Munckholm yesterday ? ”

The lieutenant burst out laughing.

“ The viceroy’s son ! Really, mother, you are dreaming, or poking fun at me. ”

“ Neither, my son ; pray, who was on duty yesterday ? ”

“ Myself, mother. ”

“ And you did not see Baron Ordener ? ”

“ Why, no, ” the lieutenant reiterated.

“ But remember, my son, that he may have come *incognito*, that you never saw him, having been educated at Copenhagen, and he at Drontheim ; consider all that is said of his whims, and his fancy for a vagabond life. Are you sure, my son, that you saw no one ? ”

Frederic reflected a moment.

“ No, ” he replied, “ no one ; I can say nothing more. ”

“ If that is so, ” the countess said, “ the baron doubtless did not go to Munckholm. ”

Musdæmon, whose surprise at first was as great as Frederic’s, had been an attentive listener to the foregoing colloquy. At this point, he interrupted the countess.

“ Noble madame, permit me, ” he said. “ Pray tell us, Frederic, the name of this vassal of whom Schumacker’s daughter is enamoured. ”

He repeated his question, for Frederic had been

deep in thought for some moments, and failed to hear it.

"I do not know,—or, rather—no, I do not know."

"How do you know that she loves a vassal, may I ask?"

"Did I say that?—a vassal? Well, yes, a vassal."

The embarrassment of the lieutenant's position was momentarily increasing. This close questioning, the thoughts to which it gave rise, and the obligation he was under to hold his peace, combined to plunge him into a dilemma from which he feared that he could not extricate himself.

"By my faith, Musdœmon, and you, my noble mother, if cross-examination is the fashion, you can amuse yourselves by cross-examining each other. As for myself, I have nothing more to say."

He opened the door abruptly, and disappeared, leaving them floundering in an abyss of conjectures. He rushed down into the courtyard, because he heard Musdœmon's voice calling him back.

He remounted his horse and rode toward the harbor, intending to take boat for Munckholm, where he thought that he might still find the stranger whose presence had served to plunge in deep reflection one of the most frivolous minds in one of the most frivolous capitals in the world.

"Suppose it were Ordener Guldenlew," he said to himself; "in that case, poor Ulrica! But no; it is impossible that any one should prefer the poverty-stricken daughter of a prisoner of state to the wealthy daughter of a powerful minister. In any

event, Schumacker's daughter can be nothing more than a passing fancy, and there is nothing to prevent a man who has a wife from having a mistress at the same time, — indeed, it's the proper thing. But no, it's not Ordener. The viceroy's son would never wear a worn-out doublet; and then that old black plume without a buckle, all bedraggled with the wind and rain; and that great cloak big enough for a tent; and the dishevelled hair, with no combs or curls; and the boots with iron spurs, all soiled with mud and dust! Really, it cannot be he. Baron von Thorvick is a knight of Dannebrog, and this stranger wears no decoration. If I was a knight of Dannebrog it seems to me that I should wear the collar of the order to bed. Oh, no! he doesn't even know *Clélie*. No, it is n't the viceroy's son."

XI.

If man could but hold fast to his impulsive warm-heartedness after experience has taught him how to direct it, if he could reap the advantages of age without bending under its weight, he would never sneer at the exalted virtues, whose first counsel is always self-sacrifice. — MME. DE STAËL : *De l'Allemagne*.

“WELL, who is it, — you, Poël ? Who bade you come up ? ”

“Your Excellency forgets that you ordered me to do so.”

“Did I ? ” said the general ; “oh, yes, I wanted you to hand me that box.”

Poël handed the governor the box, which he might have reached himself by stretching out his arm. His Excellency mechanically put it down again without opening it, and began to fumble abstractedly among some papers.

“Poël, I also wanted to ask you— What time is it ? ”

“Six o’clock,” the valet replied ; the general, by the way, had a clock staring him in the face.

“I wanted to say, Poël — What is the news in the palace ? ”

“Nothing, your Excellency, except that we are still waiting for my noble master, whom I see that the general is anxious about.”

The general rose from his tall desk, and looked indignantly at Poël.

“You have bad eyes, Poël. I anxious about Ordener! I know the reason of his absence, and I do not expect him yet.”

General Levin von Knud was so jealous of his authority that it would have seemed to him to be compromised if any subordinate had guessed one of his inmost thoughts, and imagined that Ordener was acting without his orders.

“Poël,” he continued, “you may go.”

The servant went out.

“Really,” exclaimed the governor when he was alone, “Ordener does go rather too far. Much bending breaks the finest blade. To make me pass an anxious, sleepless night; to subject General Levin to the sarcasms of the chancellor’s office, and the conjectures of a valet!—and all for no other motive than that an old enemy may receive the first embrace, which he owes to an old friend! Ah, Ordener! Ordener!—caprice is the death of liberty. Let him come now, just let him come, and deuce take me if I don’t welcome him as powder welcomes fire! Subject the governor of Drontheim to the conjectures of a valet, and the sarcasms of the chancellor’s clerks! Let him come!”

The general went on indorsing the papers without reading them, so absorbed was he by his ill-humor.

“My general! my honored father!” cried a well-known voice; and Ordener clasped in his arms the old man, who forgot even to try to repress a cry of joy.

“Ordener! my dear Ordener! Gad! how glad I am —” In the middle of the sentence he remem-

bered himself. "I am very glad, Herr Baron, that you know how to control your emotions. You seem to take pleasure in seeing me again; doubtless it was to teach yourself self-restraint that you postponed the pleasure for twenty-four hours after your arrival."

"Father, you have often told me than an unfortunate enemy ought to take precedence of a fortunate friend. I come from Munckholm."

"Certainly," the general assented, "when the enemy's danger is imminent. But Schumacker's future —"

"Is more threatening than ever. Noble general, an odious plot is being concocted against the poor fellow. Men who were born his friends are in league to crush him. A man who was born his foe has sworn to save him."

The general, whose features had gradually lost their severe expression, interrupted him.

"Very good, my dear Ordener. But what do you mean? Schumacker is under my protection. What men, what plots are you talking about?"

Ordener could not, if he would, make any definite reply to the question. He had only the vaguest information, and still more vague suspicions as to the real position of the man in whose behalf he was about to risk his life. Many people would say that his course was insane; but brave young hearts do what they believe to be right, instinctively, and not after due deliberation. Furthermore, in this world, where prudence is so cold and wisdom so satirical, who is there to deny that generous impulses indicate insanity? Everything is relative on this earth, where

everything is so contracted ; and virtue would be the greatest of follies, if behind man there were not a God.

Ordener was at the age when one trusts and is trusted ; he risked his life without hesitation. By the same token the general assented to arguments which would not have stood the test of sober discussion.

“What plots, what men, my dear father? In a few days I shall have cleared it all up ; then you shall know all that I know. I leave Drontheim again to-night.”

“What ! ” cried the old man ; “I am to have you but a few short hours ! Where are you going ? Why need you go, my dear boy ? ”

“You used sometimes to permit me, dear father, to do a praiseworthy action in secret.”

“Very true, Ordener, my boy ; but you have no very clear idea yourself why you are going, and you know the important matter which awaits your decision.”

“My father gave me a month for reflection, and I propose to devote that month to the service of another. A good deed brings good counsel. When I return we will see.”

“Am I to understand that this marriage is not to your taste ? ” queried the general, anxiously. “They say Ulrica von Ahlefeld is so beautiful ! Tell me, have you seen her ? ”

“I think so,” said Ordener ; “I should say that she is very beautiful.”

“Well ? ” said the governor.

"Well," Ordener repeated, "she will never be my wife."

This cool and decisive assertion dealt the general a violent blow. The haughty countess's suspicions recurred to his mind.

"Ordener," he said, shaking his head, "I ought to be wise, for I have been a fisherman. But I am an old fool. Ordener, the prisoner has a daughter —"

"Oh, yes!" cried the youth, "I intended to speak of her to you, general. I ask your protection, my father, for that weak and persecuted maiden."

"Upon my word," said the governor gravely, "your request is decidedly emphatic."

Ordener laid a little restraint upon his ardor.

"Why should it not be, in behalf of a poor prisoner, whose very life, and, what is more precious still, her honor, are threatened every day?"

"Life! honor! why, I am governor here, and I know nothing of such atrocities! Explain yourself."

"My noble father, the life of the prisoner and his defenceless daughter are threatened by an infernal conspiracy."

"This is a very serious charge; what proof have you?"

"The eldest son of a powerful family is at Munckholm at this moment; he was sent there to seduce Ethel. He told me so himself in so many words."

The general was fairly staggered.

"God, God!" he exclaimed; "poor, abandoned girl! Ethel and Schumacker are under my protection. Who is the villain? What family is it?"

"The family of Ahlefeld."

“Ahlefeld! yes, it's plain enough; Lieutenant Frederic is still at Munckholm. And they want you to marry into such a race, my noble Ordener! Ah! I understand your repugnance.”

The old man folded his arms and sat for some moments deep in thought. Then he rose and went to Ordener, and embraced him warmly.

“Young man, you may go,” he said; “your protégés shall not miss your protection, for I shall be here. Yes, go! what you do is right in every respect. That devilish Countess von Ahlefeld is here; perhaps you knew it?”

“The noble Countess von Ahlefeld,” the usher announced, throwing open the door.

At that name Ordener instinctively retreated to the far end of the room, and the countess, not perceiving him, cried out:—

“Your ward is making sport of you, general; he did not go to Munckholm.”

“Really!” said the general.

“My son Frederic, who has just left the palace, was on guard yesterday at the donjon, and saw no one.”

“Really, madame?” said the general again.

“So you need not expect to see your Ordener, general,” continued the countess, smiling triumphantly.

The governor did not relax the cold severity of his demeanor.

“I do not expect him, madame,” he said.

“General,” said the countess, turning around, “I thought we were alone. Who is — ?”

She cast a searching glance at Ordener, who bowed low.

"Really," she continued, "I have seen him but once, but — except for the costume, I should say — General, can it be the viceroy's son?"

"Himself, madame," said Ordener, bowing once more.

The countess smiled.

"In that case, will you permit a lady, who will soon be something more than that to you, to ask you where you went yesterday, count?"

"Count! I did not know that I had been so unfortunate as to lose my noble father, countess."

"That is not what I meant. It is much better to become a count by taking a wife than by losing one's father."

"There is little to choose between the two, madame."

The countess, although somewhat amazed, concluded to take his retort as a joke, and laughed aloud.

"I see that I was correctly informed; your Excellency is a little uncivilized. However, you will become accustomed to receiving presents from ladies when Ulrica von Ahlefeld places the chain of the Order of the Elephant around your neck."

"A veritable chain, truly!" said Ordener.

The countess's merriment became somewhat forced.

"You will see, General Levin," said she, "that your intractable pupil will be equally averse to being indebted to a lady for his colonel's commission."

"You are quite right, countess," retorted Ordener,

“a man who wears a sword ought not to owe his epaulets to a petticoat.”

The great lady's features lost every vestige of amiability.

“Oho!” she exclaimed, “whence comes the Herr Baron, I pray to know? Is it true, after all, that his Lordship did not go to Munckholm yesterday?”

“Madame, I do not make a practice of answering every question that is asked me. General, I shall see you again.”

Pressing the old man's hand, and saluting the countess, he went out, leaving the lady in a state of stupefaction over all that she did not know, alone with the governor, who was vastly indignant over all that he did know.

XII.

The fellow that sits next him now, parts bread with him, and pledges the breath of him in a divided draught, is the readiest man to kill him. — SHAKESPEARE : *Timon of Athens*.

IF the reader will now allow his imagination to set him down upon the road from Drontheim to Skongen, — a narrow, rocky road, which skirts Drontheim Fiord to the hamlet of Vyglå, — he will soon hear the steps of two travellers who left the said port of Drontheim at nightfall, and are now ascending at a round pace the terraced hills up which the Vyglå road winds like a serpent.

Both were wrapped in cloaks. One walked with the firm and springy tread of vigorous youth, straight as an arrow, and with head erect ; the end of a sword protruded beneath the hem of his cloak, and despite the darkness of the night, a plume could be seen waving in the wind upon his cap.

The other was a little shorter than his companion, and stooped slightly ; there was a hump upon his back, formed doubtless by a wallet, which was covered by an ample black cloak, whose deeply frayed edges bore witness to its long and loyal service. He had no other weapon than a long staff, which he used to assist his hesitating but hurried steps.

If the darkness prevent the reader from distinguishing the features of the travellers, he will perhaps be able to recognize them by the conversation which one of them began after an hour of silent and consequently wearisome walking.

“Master! my young master! we have reached the point from which we can see the tower of Vyglá and the steeples of Drontheim at the same moment. That black mass on the horizon in front of us is the tower; behind us there is the cathedral, whose buttresses are darker than the sky itself, and stand out against it like the ribs of the skeleton of a mammoth.”

“Is Vyglá far from Skongen?” the other pedestrian asked.

“We have to pass Ordals, my lord; we shall not be at Skongen before three o’clock.”

“What hour is it striking now?”

“Great God, master, how you startled me! Yes, it is Drontheim clock; the wind brings the sound to us, and that means a storm. The northwest wind brings the clouds.”

“The stars have all disappeared behind us.”

“Let us quicken our pace, noble sir, if you please. The storm is coming, and the mutilation of Gill’s body, and my flight, may have been discovered already. Let us go faster.”

“Willingly; your load seems heavy, old man; give it to me, for I am younger and stronger than you.”

“Oh, no, master; it is not for the eagle to carry the shell of the turtle. I am not worthy that you should carry my wallet.”

“Why not, old man, if it tires you? It seems

very heavy. Pray, what does it contain? You stumbled just now, and it rang like iron when it struck the ground."

The old man suddenly moved away from his companion's side.

"Rang like iron, master? Oh, no, you are mistaken. There is nothing in it — nothing but provisions and clothes. No, it does n't tire me."

The young man's good-humored proposition seemed to have terrified his companion inexplicably, and he did his best to conceal his alarm.

"Oh, well!" said the young man, without noticing it, "if the load does n't tire you, keep it."

The old man's mind was somewhat relieved, but he made haste to change the subject.

"It's a gloomy business, master, to follow by night, and as fugitives, a road which it would be so pleasant to travel by daylight for purposes of observation. At our left, on the banks of the fiord, there are quantities of Runic stones, on which inscriptions, carved, according to tradition, by gods and giants, may be studied. At our right, behind the rocks which skirt the road, stretches the salt swamp of Sciold, which undoubtedly is connected with the sea by some underground canal; for the sea-worm is found there, — that curious fish which, as your humble servant and guide had the honor to discover, lives upon sand. In the tower of Vygla, which we are approaching, the pagan king Vermond burned the breasts of St. Etheldera, the glorious martyr, with a fire built of wood from the true cross, brought to Copenhagen by Olaus III., and conquered from him

by the king of Norway. It is said that since then they have tried in vain to transform the accursed tower into a chapel ; every crucifix that has been placed therein has been consumed by the lightning."

Even as he spoke a brilliant flash lighted up the fiord, the hill, the cliffs, and the tower, and vanished again before the eye could fairly take in any one of those objects. They halted by a common impulse, and the flash was followed almost immediately by a violent thunder-clap, the echoes of which rolled from cloud to cloud in the heavens, and from rock to rock on earth.

They looked up. All the stars were hidden, great black clouds were chasing one another through the sky, and the storm was gathering overhead like an avalanche. The high wind by which the masses of vapor were driven had not yet descended to the level of the trees ; not a leaf stirred, nor had a drop of rain fallen. They could hear a sullen roaring high in the air, and that, with the exception of the booming of the waters of the fiord, was the only sound that arose in the darkness, which was intensified by the inky storm-clouds.

The tumultuous silence was suddenly broken by a sort of roar close by the two travellers, which made the old man start.

"All-powerful God !" he cried, grasping his companion's arm, "that was the laugh of the devil in the storm, or the voice of —"

A second flash, followed by its peal of thunder, interrupted his sentence. The storm at once broke with great violence, as if it were awaiting the signal.

The travellers wrapped their cloaks more closely around them, as a protection against the rain which came in torrents from the clouds, and the dust which the fierce gusts raised in eddying whirls from the still dry earth.

"Old man," said the younger of the two, "that last flash showed me the tower of Vygla at our right; let us leave the road, and seek shelter there."

"Shelter in the Accursed Tower!" cried the old man; "St. Hospitius protect us! Consider, my young master, that the tower is deserted."

"So much the better, old man; we shall not be kept waiting at the door."

"Remember the abominable outrage by which it was defiled!"

"Very well! it can purge itself of the stain by giving us shelter. I tell you that on such a night I would ask for hospitality in a cave of robbers."

In spite of the old man's remonstrances, he seized his arm and started for the building, which the almost incessant flashes revealed to them a short distance away. As they drew near, they saw a light at one of the loopholes in the sides of the tower.

"You see that the tower is not deserted, after all. That makes your mind easier, no doubt."

"Oh, God! merciful God!" cried the old man, "whither are you taking me, master?"

They were at the foot of the tower. The younger traveller knocked loudly at the new door of the dreaded ruin.

"Calm yourself, old man; perhaps some pious

recluse has sanctified this defiled structure by dwelling in it."

"No, I will not go in. I tell you that no hermit can live here, unless he has for his chaplet one of Beelzebub's seven chains."

Meanwhile the light descended from one loophole to another, and finally shone through the keyhole of the door.

"You are very late, Nychol!" cried a shrill voice; "the gallows was set up at noon, and it takes but six hours to come from Skongen to Vygla. Was the work made any heavier?"

The question was asked just as the door opened. The woman who opened it, seeing two strange faces instead of the one she expected to see, gave a cry of alarm and menace and started back.

Her appearance was not particularly reassuring. She was quite tall, and was holding an iron lamp above her head, the light of which fell full upon her face. There was something corpse-like in the livid hue of her angular features, and her sunken eyes emitted sinister flashes like those of a funeral torch. She was dressed below the waist in a petticoat of scarlet serge, beneath which her bare feet could be seen, and which bore red stains of a different shade. Her emaciated breast was half-covered by a man's coat of the same color, with sleeves cut off at the elbow. The wind coming in through the open door, blew her long gray hair in every direction, and added tenfold to the savage expression of her fierce countenance.

"My good woman," said the younger of the new-

comers, "the rain is falling in sheets, you have a roof, and we have money."

His older companion pulled his cloak, and said in a hoarse whisper : —

"Oh ! master, what are you saying ? If this is n't the devil's house, it is the haunt of some bandit. Our money will be our ruin, instead of protecting us."

"Silence !" said the young man, and he drew a purse from his pocket and let the hostess have a glimpse of its contents as he repeated his request.

She had by this time recovered somewhat from her surprise, and was gazing first at one, then at the other, with haggard, staring eyes.

"Strangers !" she cried at last, as if she had not heard what had been said, "have your guardian angels abandoned you ? Whom do you seek among the accursed inhabitants of the Accursed Tower ? Strangers ! no man ever advised you to seek shelter in this ruin, for every one would have said to you, 'Far better the roaring of the tempest than the fire-side of the tower of Vygla.' The only living creature who can enter here never enters the dwellings of human beings ; he leaves his solitude only to mingle with the crowd ; he lives only to deal out death to others. He has no place except in the maledictions of men ; he serves them only in the way of forwarding their schemes of revenge ; he exists only by their crimes. And the vilest criminal, when his time for punishment arrives, unloads upon him the general contempt, and thinks he has the right to add his own to it. Strangers ! you are still strangers,

for your feet have not yet spurned with loathing the threshold of this tower; do not disturb the wolf and her whelps any longer, but go back to the road which other men travel, and if you do not wish to be shunned by your kind, do not tell them that your faces have been lighted by the lamp of the occupants of Vygla Tower."

With that she pointed to the door, and came forward toward the travellers. The older trembled in every limb, and looked imploringly at the young man, who, having utterly failed to comprehend the woman's words, because of her extreme volubility, thought her mad; nor did he feel in the least inclined to go out into the rain, which was falling with a great noise.

"Upon my word, my good woman, you have described a very interesting personage, with whom I dislike to lose an opportunity to become acquainted."

"Acquaintance with him, young man, is soon made, and sooner ended. If your evil genius drives you to it, go and murder a living man, or defile a corpse."

"Defile a corpse!" the old man repeated in a shaking voice, and standing in his companion's shadow.

"I hardly understand the method you suggest," said the latter, "and it is certainly very indirect; it is much simpler to remain here. One must be mad to continue a journey in such weather."

"But far more mad," muttered the old man, "to seek refuge from such weather in such a place."

"Unhappy youth!" cried the woman, "do not

knock at his door, who never opens any door save that of the tomb."

"Though the door of the tomb were really to open for me with yours, woman, it shall never be said that I recoiled for a threatening word. My sword will be my guaranty. Come, close the door, for the wind is cold, and take this gold."

"Bah! what is your gold to me?" rejoined the woman; "though precious in your hands, in mine it will become baser than tin. Very well, remain here for your gold. It may protect you from the storms of heaven, it cannot save you from the scorn of men. Remain; you pay a better price for your entertainment than is paid for a murder. Wait for me here a moment, and give me your gold. Yes, it is the first time that a man's hands have entered here laden with gold without being also stained with blood."

She set down her lamp and barricaded the door, and then disappeared up a dark stairway at the end of the room.

While the old man was invoking the glorious St. Hospitius by all his names, and cursing heartily, but in an undertone, the imprudence of his youthful companion, the latter took the light, and set about investigating the great circular room in which they were standing. The sight which met his eyes as he drew near the wall made him start back, and the old man, who was gazing after him, cried out: —

"Great God, master! a gallows!"

A tall gallows was, in very truth, leaning against the wall, and reached to the centre-piece of the damp, black arch.

"Yes," said the young man, "and here are saws of wood and iron, chains and necklets, and a wooden horse with great pincers hanging over it."

"Saints of Paradise!" cried the old man, "where, in God's name, are we?"

The other coolly pursued his examination.

"This is a coil of hempen rope; here are crucibles and kettles; this part of the wall is covered with pincers and dissecting-knives; here are leather goads with steel points, an axe, and a club."

"Is it the storehouse of hell?" the old man interrupted, more and more dismayed by this terrible catalogue.

"Here are copper cranes, wheels with bronze teeth, a box of huge nails, and a jack-screw. These are, indeed, ominous properties. You may well be indignant that my impatience forced you to come here with me."

"You admit that, do you?"

The old man was more dead than alive.

"But don't be alarmed; what matters the place where you may be? I am with you."

"A fine protection!" muttered the old fellow, whose fear and respect for his young companion were somewhat weakened by the greater fear: "a sword thirty inches long against a gallows thirty cubits high!"

The tall, red woman reappeared, and took up the iron lamp, motioning to the travellers to follow her. They cautiously ascended a worn, narrow staircase cut in the wall of the tower. At every loophole a puff of wind and rain threatened to extinguish

the flickering light of the lamp, which the hostess shielded with her long, thin hand. More than once they stumbled over loose stones, which the old man's fearful imagination mistook for human bones scattered upon the steps, before they arrived at a circular apartment on the first floor of the building, similar to the one they had just left. In the centre was a vast fireplace, as is customary in structures of the Gothic type; a fire was burning brightly on the hearth, and its light had attracted the attention of the travellers as they ascended; the smoke found egress through a hole in the ceiling, not without sensibly darkening the room. A spit, laden with fresh meat, was turning in front of the blaze.

The old man recoiled horror-stricken.

"On that accursed hearth," he said to his companion, "the embers of the true cross consumed the members of a saint."

A rough table stood at a short distance from the fireplace, and the woman invited the travellers to take seats thereat.

"Strangers," she said, placing the lamp between them, "supper will soon be ready, and my husband will certainly hasten his return, for fear that the demon of midnight may pass by the Accursed Tower, and carry him off."

Thereupon Ordener — the reader, of course, does not need to be told that the travellers were Ordener and his guide, Benignus Spiagudry — was able to examine at his leisure the extraordinary disguise assumed by the latter, upon which he had exhausted all the resources of his imagination, fer-

tilized by the dread of being recognized and detained. The poor runaway keeper had exchanged his deer-skin garments for a suit of sober black, left at the Spladgest long before by a celebrated grammarian of Drontheim, who drowned himself in despair at his inability to discover why *Jupiter* takes *Jovis* in the genitive. His wooden clogs were replaced by heavy postilion's boots, much worn by rubbing against the horse's sides, in which his lank legs had so much room that he could not have walked at all in them without stuffing in half a bundle of hay. The flowing wig of a dandified young Frenchman, who was murdered at the gates of Drontheim, concealed his baldness, and hung down over his sharp and uneven shoulders. One of his eyes was covered with a plaster, and by virtue of a jar of face-paint which he found in the pockets of an old maid who died of love-sickness, his pale and wrinkled cheeks were decked in brilliant vermilion, a decoration which the rain had impartially extended over his whole face from his eyebrows to his chin. Before taking his seat he carefully placed under him the wallet which he carried on his back, wrapped himself in his old cloak, and while his companion's attention was riveted upon him, his own seemed to be entirely absorbed by the roast meat which the hostess was tending, and at which he gazed with horror blended with anxiety. At intervals broken sentences escaped from his mouth: "Human flesh!—*horrendas epulas!* Anthropophagi! Moloch's feast! *Ne pueros coram populo Medea trucidet.* Where are we? Atreus! Druidess! Irmensul! The devil struck down Lycaon."

At last he shrieked : —

“ God have mercy on me ! I saw a tail ! ”

Ordener, by dint of watching and listening carefully, had almost followed the thread of his thought, and could not forbear a smile.

“ That tail is rather alarming,” he said. “ Perhaps it’s part of the devil’s crest.”

Spiagudry did not hear the joke ; he was gazing earnestly at the farther end of the room. He shuddered and put his mouth to Ordener’s ear.

“ Look there, master,” he said, — “ over yonder in the dark corner, on that heap of straw.”

“ Well, what is it ?

“ Three naked bodies, lying perfectly still, — the dead bodies of three children ? ”

“ Somebody is knocking at the door of the tower,” cried the red woman, who was crouching by the hearth.

A blow, followed immediately by two more violent ones, made itself heard above the howling of the storm, which was increasing in fury.

“ It’s Nychol at last ! ”

The hostess seized the lamp and rushed from the room.

The travellers had not resumed their conversation when they heard a confused murmur of voices in the lower room, and finally these words fell upon their ears, uttered in a tone which made Spiagudry start and tremble.

“ Be quiet, woman, we will remain. The thunder enters without waiting for the door to be opened.”

Spiagudry pressed close against Ordener.

“Master ! master !” he exclaimed faintly, “woe betide us !”

Footsteps were heard coming hurriedly up the staircase, and two men in priestly garb entered the room, followed by the terrified hostess.

One of the men was quite tall and wore the black coat and round wig of a Lutheran minister ; the other was much shorter and was clad in a hermit's frock caught in at the waist by a cord. The hood was pulled down over his face so that nothing but his long black beard could be seen, and his hands were entirely hidden in the flowing sleeves of his frock.

At sight of these two pacific individuals, Spiagudry felt a decided diminution of the fright which the voice of one of them had caused him.

“Do not be alarmed, dear madame,” said the minister ; “Christian priests are wont to befriend him who would destroy them ; are they likely to destroy her who may befriend them ? We humbly beg you to give us shelter. If the reverend doctor who accompanies me spoke harshly to you but now, he did wrong to forget to use that moderation in his speech which is enjoined upon us by our vows ; alas ! the most saintly sometimes err. I had lost my way on the road from Skongen to Drontheim, and was without a guide in the darkness, without shelter from the storm. The reverend brother here, whom I chanced to meet, and who is, like myself, far from his home, deigned to permit me to bear him company to your abode. He spoke highly of your generous hospitality, dear madame ; I am sure he was justified in so doing. Do not say, like the cruel shepherd,

'Advena, cur intras ?' Make us welcome, worthy hostess, and God will save your harvest from the storm, he will provide shelter for your flocks from the tempest, even as you do the same for lost and way-worn travellers."

"I have neither harvest nor flocks, old man," interrupted the woman, fiercely.

"Oh, well! if you are poor, God provides for the poor before the rich. You and your husband will grow old together, respected for your virtues if not for your wealth; your children will multiply upon the earth, blessed with the esteem of their fellow-men, and will be what their father was before them."

"Hold your peace!" cried the hostess. "Our children, remaining such as we are, will grow old burdened by the scorn of their fellow-men, which is handed down in our race from generation to generation. Hold your peace, old man. Blessings turn to curses on our heads."

"Oh, Heaven!" exclaimed the minister; "who are you, in God's name? In what crimes is your life passed?"

"What do you call crimes? What do you call virtue? We enjoy one privilege here,—we can neither possess virtue nor commit crime."

"The woman's mind is wandering," said the minister, turning to the hermit, who was drying his stuff frock at the fire.

"No, priest," retorted the woman; "let me tell you where you are. I prefer to be an object of horror rather than of pity. I am not a madwoman, but the wife of—"

A prolonged knocking at the door of the tower prevented the completion of her sentence, to the great disappointment of Spiagudry and Ordener, who had listened attentively and in silence to this dialogue.

“Cursed be the lord-justiciary of Skongen,” muttered the woman between her teeth, “who quartered us in this tower, which stands so near the high-road ! perhaps it is n’t Nychol even yet.”

Nevertheless, she took the lamp.

“After all, what does it matter if it is another traveller ? — the brook can flow where the torrent has broken out a bed.”

The four travellers left to themselves eyed one another by the flickering light of the fire. Spiagudry, who was terrified at first by the hermit’s voice, and afterwards reassured by his black beard, would perhaps have begun to quake anew if he could have seen the piercing glance with which that individual was honoring him from beneath his hood.

As no one else seemed disposed to speak, the minister ventured upon a question : —

“Brother hermit, I presume that you are one of the Catholic priests who succeeded in evading the last persecution, and that you were returning to your hiding-place when I was fortunate enough to fall in with you. Could you tell me where we are ?”

The dilapidated door at the top of the ruined stairway opened before the hermit replied.

“Just let a storm come, wife, and there are plenty who are glad to sit at our abhorred table, and take shelter under our accursed roof.”

"Nychol," the woman replied, "I could not prevent —"

"What do all these guests matter provided they pay? Gold is as well earned by lodging a traveller as by strangling a brigand."

The speaker had stopped at the door, where the four strangers could scrutinize him at their leisure. He was a man of colossal size, dressed, like his wife, in red serge. His huge head seemed to rest upon his broad shoulders, in striking contrast to the long, bony neck of his amiable spouse. He had a low forehead, thick eyebrows, and a flat nose; his eyes were surrounded by dark rings and gleamed like the reflection of fire in blood. The lower part of his face was smoothly shaven, so that his cavernous mouth was fully exposed, the livid lips half-parted by a hideous smile, like the edges of an open wound. Bushy whiskers hung down from his cheeks and made his face look square. On his head was a gray felt hat, dripping with rain; he barely touched the rim with his finger when he spied the four strangers.

The moment his eye fell upon him Benignus Spigudry uttered a cry of alarm, and the Lutheran minister turned his head away in horrified surprise when the master of the house recognized him and thus accosted him.

"What, are you there again, master minister? Really, I did n't expect to have the pleasure of seeing your pitiful, startled countenance again to-day."

The minister repressed an instinctive movement of repugnance. His features became calm and serious.

“And I, my son, rejoice that chance has led the shepherd again to the lost sheep, to the end, doubtless, that the sheep may at last return to the fold.”

“Ah! by the gibbet of Haman,” retorted the other, laughing uproariously, “that’s the first time I ever heard myself called a sheep. Believe me, father, if you want to flatter the vulture, you’d best not call him a pigeon.”

“He by whose means the vulture becomes a dove, my son, administers consolation, not flattery. You think that I fear you, but I only pity you.”

“Gad! master, you must have a good store of pity; I should have supposed that you spent it all upon that poor devil whom you exhibited your crucifix to to-day, to hide my gallows.”

“That poor wretch was less to be pitied than you,” rejoined the minister, “for he wept, and you laugh. Happy he who realizes, when his expiation begins, how vastly less powerful is the arm of man than the word of God!”

“Well said, father,” the host retorted, with horrifying, ironical merriment. “The man who weeps! Our man to-day committed no other crime than that of loving the king so dearly that he could not live without making his Majesty’s portrait upon sundry little copper disks, which he then gilded artistically to make them more worthy of the royal effigy. Our gracious sovereign is not ungrateful, and rewarded him for his intense affection with a fine hempen rope, which, I may say for the information of my worthy guests, was presented to him to-day on the public square of Skongen by myself, grand chancellor of

the order of the gibbet, assisted by my good friend here, grand chaplain of said order."

"Wretched man, be still!" cried the minister. "How can he who punishes thus forget the punishment? Listen to the thunder —"

"Well, what is thunder? A peal of laughter from Satan."

"Merciful God! he has just witnessed the death of a man, and he blasphemes!"

"Enough of your sermons, old idiot," cried the host, in thundering, almost angry tones; "unless you choose to curse the angel of darkness who has brought us together twice within twelve hours on the same vehicle and under the same roof. Imitate your comrade, the hermit, who holds his tongue, for he is anxious to return to his cave at Lynrass. I thank you, brother hermit, for the blessing which I see you bestow upon the Accursed Tower every morning as you pass over the hill; but, upon my word, before this you always seemed tall to me, and that jet black beard always looked white. You are the hermit of Lynrass, are you not, — the only hermit in Drontheimhus?"

"I am, indeed, the only one," the hermit replied in a hollow voice.

"In that case we are the two recluses of the province. — Hallo, there! Bechlie, make haste with that quarter of lamb, for I am hungry. I was delayed at the village of Burlock by that cursed Doctor Manryll, who wanted to give me only twelve ascalins for the body; they give forty to that villanous old keeper of the Spladgest at Drontheim — Ho, my

friend with the wig, what's the matter? you nearly fell over backward. — By the way, Bechlie, have you finished the skeleton of Orgivius, the poisoner and famous magician? It is time to send it to the museum of curiosities at Bergen. Did you send one of your little animals to the syndic of Lœvig to collect what he owes? — four double crowns for roasting a sorceress and two alchemists, and for carrying away several of the rafters of his court-room which they had bewitched; twenty ascalins for hanging Ismael Typhainus, a Jew of whom the reverend bishop complained; and one crown for making a new wooden arm for the stone gallows belonging to the town."

"The money remains in the syndic's hands," the woman replied shrilly, "because your son forgot to take the wooden cup to put it in, and the judge's servant would n't let him take it in his hand."

The husband frowned.

"If their necks once come under my hands, they'll see if any wooden cup is needed to hold them. The syndic must be humored, however. They have referred to him the matter of Ivar the robber, who complained because I administered the question to him, alleging that as he had not then been tried he was not infamous, and therefore the question should have been administered by somebody else. By the way, wife, don't let your little ones play with my pincers and tongs; they have raised the devil with all my tools, so that I could n't use them to-day. Where are the little villains?" he continued, drawing near the pile of straw on which Spiagudry fancied that

he saw three corpses. "They're sleeping there, through all this noise, as if they'd been hanged."

From these words, the atrocity of which was in such strong contrast to the terrifying tranquillity and ghastly jocoseness of the speaker, the reader has perhaps been able to guess at the identity of the occupant of the tower of Vyglá. Spiagudry, who recognized him the moment he appeared, having often seen him play a prominent part in certain ghastly ceremonies upon the public square of Drontheim, was near fainting with fright, remembering particularly the reasons which he personally had for avoiding this terrible functionary. He leaned toward Ordener, and said to him almost inaudibly:—

"It is Nychol Orugix, the executioner of the province of Drontheim!"

Ordener was horrified for a moment, and longed to be back upon the road in the storm. But soon he became conscious of an indefinable feeling of curiosity, and while pitying the embarrassment and alarm of his old guide, he devoted his whole attention to the words and manner of the strange being before him, as one listens with eager interest to the growling of a hyena or the roaring of a tiger, brought from the desert into our streets.

Poor Benignus's mind was far too deeply engrossed to make any psychological observations. Hidden behind Ordener, he cowered in the folds of his cloak, put his hand anxiously to his plaster, drew the back part of his flowing wig over his face, and breathed spasmodically.

Meanwhile the hostess had served up the quarter of roast lamb, garnished with its reassuring tail, upon a huge earthen plate. The executioner sat down opposite Ordener and Spiagudry, and between the two clergymen; his wife, after placing upon the table a jug of beer, a loaf of *rindebrod*,¹ and five wooden plates, sat down by the fire and busied herself sharpening her husband's maltreated tools.

"There, Herr Minister," laughed Orugix, "the sheep offers you some lamb. Friend with the wig, did the wind blow your headgear over your face in that way?"

"The wind — yes, friend, the storm —" stammered the trembling Spiagudry.

"Come, pluck up your courage, old fellow. You see that the good priests and I are hail fellows well met. Tell us who you and your taciturn young friend are, and do a little talking. Let's get acquainted. If your conversation comes up to what your appearance promises, you must be very entertaining."

"My good friend is jocose," said the keeper, showing his teeth, and winking, to make a show of laughter; "I am only a poor old man."

"Oh! yes," exclaimed the jovial executioner, "some old scholar, some old wizard."

"A scholar, yes, good sir; but a wizard — oh, no!"

"So much the worse; a wizard would complete our merry Sanhedrim. My worthy guests, let us drink the health of our scholastic friend, who is going to enliven our supper for us. To the health of the man

¹ Bread made of bark, and used as food by the poorer classes in Norway.

I hanged to-day, brother preacher! Come, come, father hermit; do you decline my beer?"

The hermit had taken a gourd full of the clearest water from beneath his frock, and filled his glass with it.

"Zounds! Master Hermit of Lynrass," cried the executioner, "if you won't taste my beer, I will taste that water which you prefer to it."

"Very well," the hermit replied.

"First take off your glove, Reverend Father," said the executioner; "it's contrary to rule to pour out drink except with a bare hand."

The hermit shook his head.

"It's a vow I have taken," he said.

"Pour away, then."

Orugix hardly touched the glass to his lips, before he pushed it roughly away, while the hermit emptied his at a draught.

"By the cup of Jesus, Master Hermit, what is that infernal liquor? I have never drunk anything like it since the day I was almost drowned on the voyage from Copenhagen to Drontheim. That's not water from Lynrass spring, hermit; it's sea water."

"Sea water!" echoed Spiagudry, his terror increased beyond measure by the sight of the hermit's glove.

"Well, well!" said the executioner, turning toward him with a burst of laughter, "everything seems to alarm you here, my old Abalsom, even the draught of a saintly cenobite, who is doing penance."

"Alas! no, my good sir. But sea-water — there is but one man —"

“Go to! you don’t know what you’re saying, my learned friend; your evident embarrassment in this company must come from an uneasy conscience or from contempt.”

These words, which were uttered with some temper, convinced Spiagudry of the necessity of dissimulating his terror. In order to mollify his host he called to his aid his extraordinary memory, and rallied what little presence of mind he still retained.

“Contempt! I feel contempt for you, my master, whose presence in a province gives that province the *merum imperium*! — for you, the public executioner, the right hand of the secular power, the sword of justice, the buckler of the innocent: — for you, whom Aristotle, in the last chapter of the sixth book of his ‘Politics,’ classes among magistrates, and whose wage Paris of Puteo, in his treatise *De Syndico*, fixes at five golden crowns, as witness the following passage: *quinque aureos manivolto*! — for you, my master, whose professional brethren at Cronstadt receive titles of nobility after they have cut off three hundred heads! — for you, whose awful, yet honorable duties are performed, and with pride in the performance, in Franconia, by the most recently married man, at Reutlingen by the youngest member of the council, at Stedien by the magistrate who was last installed! And is it not true also, my good master, that your brethren in France have the right of *havadium* over every patient at Saint-Ladre, over the swine, and the cakes of Epiphany Eve? How could I fail to have the deepest respect for you, when the Abbé of Saint-Germain-des-Prés gives

you a pig's head on St. Vincent's day every year, and puts you at the head of his procession?"

At this point the keeper's flow of learning was rudely interrupted by the executioner.

"Faith, it's the first I ever knew of it! The learned abbé you speak of, friend, has thus far cheated me out of the valuable privileges which you describe so seductively. Strangers," continued Orugix, "aside from all the jabber of this old fool, it is true that I have made a failure of my career. To-day I am nothing but the poor executioner of a paltry province, and yet I ought to have made a greater success than Stillison Dickoy, the famous executioner of Russia. Would you believe that I am the same man who was detailed, twenty-four years gone, to execute Schumacker?"

"Schumacker, Count von Griffenfeld?" cried Ordener.

"So that surprises you, my dumb friend. Yes, the same Schumacker, who, by a curious chance, is likely to fall into my hands again, if it should please the king to revoke his reprieve. Let us empty that jug, gentlemen, and I will tell you how it happened that I came to this miserable plight after such a brilliant beginning.

"In 1676 I was the valet of Rhum Stuald, royal executioner at Copenhagen. At the time of the sentence of the Count von Griffenfeld my master was sick, and I, thanks to my interest at court, was selected to take his place for that noteworthy function. On the fifth of June — I shall never forget that day — about five o'clock in the morning, the

scaffold builder and I erected a fine scaffold on the square in front of the citadel, and draped it in black out of respect for the condemned. At eight o'clock the guard surrounded the scaffold, and the Schleswig Uhlans kept back the crowd which thronged the square. Who in my place would not have been inflated with pride? I stood waiting on the platform, sword in hand. Every eye was riveted on me; at that moment I was the most important personage in the two kingdoms. 'My fortune is made,' I said to myself, 'for what could all these great lords who have sworn to crush the chancellor do without me?' I already fancied myself royal headsman; I had valets of my own, and special privileges. Hark! the clock on the fortress strikes ten. The condemned man comes forth from his cell, crosses the square, mounts the scaffold with firm step and unmoved bearing. I offer to tie back his hair; he pushes me away, and performs that last service for himself. 'It's a long time,' he says with a smile to the Prior of Saint Andrews, 'since I dressed my own hair.' I offer him the black bandage to bind over his eyes, and he scornfully puts it aside, but without visiting his scorn upon me. 'My friend,' he says, 'this is probably the first time that the two officers who occupy the opposite extremes of the administration of the law — the chancellor and the headsman — have ever stood together in so small a space.' Those words remained written in my brain. He also declined the black cushion which I wanted to put under his knees, embraced the priest, and knelt, after declaring aloud that he died an innocent

man. Thereupon I broke with a club the shield which bore his coat of arms, shouting in the customary form, 'This is not done except for just cause!' This insult shook the count's nerve; he turned pale, but said quickly, 'The king gave it to me, and the king can take it away.' Then he put his head on the block, with his eyes turned to the east, and I raised my sword with both hands. Now listen! At that moment a shout reached my ears: 'Pardon, in the king's name! pardon for Schumacker!' I turned around. An aide-de-camp was galloping madly toward the scaffold, waving a paper over his head. The count rose with an expression, not of joy exactly, but of satisfaction. The paper was handed to him. 'Great God!' he cried, 'imprisonment for life! their pardon is more cruel than death.' He came down from the scaffold, which he had ascended with the utmost serenity, as downhearted as a common thief. It was all the same to me. I never suspected that that man's reprieve would be my ruin. After taking down the scaffold I returned to my master's house, still hopeful of the future, although somewhat disappointed at losing the gold crown which was paid for cutting off a head. Would to God that had been all I lost. The next day I received orders to leave the capital, with an appointment as executioner for the province of Drontheim! A provincial executioner in the remotest province of Norway! Now just see, gentlemen, to what great results small causes may lead. It seems that the enemies of the count, in order to gain credit for clemency without losing anything by it, had arranged

that the reprieve should arrive a moment *after* the execution. They failed of their object by about one minute, and laid it to my moderation ; as if it would have been decent to prevent so illustrious a character from amusing himself for a few moments before the last moment of all ! — as if a royal executioner could decapitate a grand chancellor without greater dignity and moderation than that with which a provincial hangman would hang a Jew ! There was something else behind it, too. I had a brother, — indeed I think I have him still. By changing his name he had succeeded in getting into the household of the new chancellor, Count von Ahlefeld. My presence at Copenhagen annoyed the villain. My brother loathed me, because he knew that it might fall to my lot to hang him some day.”

At this point the voluble fellow paused to enjoy his grim joke, and then went on : —

“ You see, my dear guests, that I make the best of my lot. To the devil with ambition. I carry on my trade honestly here. I either sell my bodies, or Bechlie makes skeletons of them, which are bought for the museum of anatomy at Bergen. I laugh at everything, even at that poor woman, who has led a wandering life, and whom solitude drives mad. My three heirs are being brought up to fear the devil and the gallows. My name is the scarecrow of small children throughout the province. The syndics provide me with a cart and red clothes. The Accursed Tower shelters me from the rain as well as the bishop’s palace. The old priests who are driven here by the storm preach to me, and the scholars

try to wheedle me. In short, I am as happy as many another; I eat and drink, I hang and I sleep."

The hangman did not carry through this long discourse without frequent recourse to the beer-jug, and noisy explosions of laughter.

"He kills, and still he sleeps!" muttered the minister; "the unhappy wretch!"

"This wretched creature is happy!" cried the hermit.

"Yes, brother hermit," said the hangman, "as wretched as you, but certainly happier. Mind you, the business would not be a bad one, if people did n't seem to take pleasure in cutting down the profits. Would you believe that some grand wedding or other has given the newly appointed chaplain at Drontheim an excuse for begging for pardon for twelve condemned men, who belong to me in all conscience?"

"Who belong to you?" cried the minister.

"Yes, of course they do, father. Seven of them were to be scourged, two branded on the left cheek, and three hanged; that makes twelve in all. Yes, I lose twelve crowns and thirty ascalins if the pardons are granted. What do you think, strangers, of this chaplain who makes so free with my property? The cursed priest is one Athanasius Munder. Oh! if I but had my hands on him!"

The minister rose and said with perfect equanimity and coolness:—

"My son, I am Athanasius Munder."

At this avowal, Orugix sprang to his feet with blazing eyes. But his wrathful gaze met the calm,

good-humored glance of the minister, and he slowly resumed his seat, in speechless embarrassment.

For a moment there was perfect silence. Ordener, who had risen from the table, ready to defend the minister, was the first to speak.

“Nychol Orugix, here are thirteen crowns to compensate you for the pardon of the condemned men.”

“Alas!” interposed the minister, “who can say that I shall obtain it? I must get speech with the son of the viceroy, for it all depends upon his marriage with the chancellor’s daughter.”

“Herr Chaplain,” the young man replied with conviction, “you will obtain it. Ordener Guldenlew will not wear the wedding ring until the shackles of your protégés are broken.”

“You can do nothing, young stranger; but God hears you, and will reward you.”

Meanwhile Ordener’s thirteen crowns had finished the work begun by the minister’s gaze. Nychol’s wrath was entirely allayed, and he resumed his jovial humor.

“Herr Chaplain, you are a fine fellow,” he said, “worthy to officiate at the chapel of St. Hilarion. I spoke more harshly of you than I really thought. You walk straight in your path, and it’s not your fault if it crosses mine. But the man I have a bone to pick with is the keeper of the dead-house at Drontheim, that old wizard of the Spladgest. What’s his name? Splugry? Spadugry? Tell me, my learned friend, who are a perfect Babel of useful knowledge, and know everything there is to know, can’t you help me to recall the name of that old sorcerer, your con-

frère? You must have met him sometimes, on the witches' Sabbath, riding through the air on a broomstick."

There is no doubt that if poor Benignus had had the opportunity to make his escape at that moment upon some aerial steed of that description, he would have entrusted his frail, terrified human organism to it with the greatest delight. The love of life had never attained such vigorous development in him as since he had become conscious of the imminence of his danger. Everything that he saw alarmed him, — the haggard eye of the red woman, the gloves and the mysterious potion of the hermit, the adventurous daring of his young companion, the awe-inspiring traditions of the Accursed Tower, and overtopping all else, the executioner, — the executioner to whose den fate had led him, a fugitive, carrying a heavy load of crime. He trembled so that voluntary motion was entirely out of the question, especially when the conversation turned in his direction, and he heard the appeal of the terrible Orugix. As he had no idea of imitating the heroic conduct of the minister, his tongue refused for a long time to perform its office.

"Well," the executioner continued, "do you, or do you not, know the name of the keeper of the Spladgest? Does your wig make you dumb?"

"A little, master," he stammered at last; "no, I don't know his name — I swear I do not."

"He doesn't know it?" exclaimed the dreaded voice of the hermit. "He does wrong to take such an oath. The man's name is Benignus Spiagudry."

"Mine! mine! Great God!" cried the old man, beside himself with fright.

The hangman roared with laughter.

"Who said that was your name? We're talking about that old heathen of a keeper. On my word, this pedagogue loses his wits at nothing. What would become of him, I wonder, if there were any real reason for his absurd contortions. He would be an amusing old idiot to hang. And so, my learned doctor," he continued, revelling in Spiagudry's dismay, "you don't know this Benignus Spiagudry?"

"No, master," said the keeper, somewhat reassured by his *incognito*, "I do not know him, I assure you. And since he is so unfortunate as to have offended you, I should be truly sorry, master, to know the man."

"You seem to know him, master hermit?" said Orugix.

"Yes, that I do. He is a tall, spare old man, and quite bald."

Spiagudry, justly alarmed at this description, hastily readjusted his wig.

"His hands," continued the hermit, "are as long as a robber's who has not fallen in with a traveller for a week; his back is bent —"

Spiagudry straightened himself up as well as he could.

"In short, one might take him for one of the bodies he has in his charge, if his eyes were not so bright."

Spiagudry put his hand to his unnecessary plaster.

"Thanks, father," said the hangman to the hermit,

“wherever I come across the old Jew, I shall recognize him now.”

Spiagudry, who was a very good Christian, felt his soul rise in revolt at that intolerable insult, and could not hold back an exclamation.

“Jew, master !”

With that he stopped short, trembling lest he had said too much.

“Well, Jew or Pagan, what does it matter, if he has dealings with the devil, as they say ?”

“I could readily believe it,” the hermit rejoined, with a wicked smile which his hood did not entirely hide, “if he were not such a poltroon. But how could he ever come to terms with Satan ? He is as cowardly as he is wicked. When fear takes hold of him, he loses his head altogether.”

The hermit spoke slowly, as if he were disguising his voice ; and the very moderation of his words imparted a peculiar significance to them.

“He loses his head altogether !” Spiagudry repeated to himself.

“I am sorry that such a villain should be a coward,” said the executioner ; “he’s hardly worth the trouble of hating. One must fight a serpent, but can only crush a lizard.”

Spiagudry ventured a few words in his own defence.

“But you are quite sure, good sirs, that the public officer of whom you speak is such as you describe him ? Is his reputation — ?”

“Reputation !” the hermit broke in, “he has the worst reputation in the province !”

Benignus turned in his disappointment to the executioner.

“What fault have you to find with him, master? I suppose of course that your hatred has a legitimate basis.”

“You do well, old man, to suppose so. As his business bears some resemblance to mine, Spiagudry does all he can to injure me.”

“Oh! master, don’t think it. Or if it be as you say, remember that he has not seen you as I have, surrounded by your amiable wife and your lovely children, welcoming strangers to the comforts of your fireside. If he had enjoyed your generous hospitality, as we have, master, the poor wretch could never be your enemy.”

Spiagudry had no sooner finished this clever allocation than the red woman, who had thus far remained dumb, rose, and said in a harsh and solemn voice: —

“The serpent’s tongue is never more venomous than when it is coated with honey.”

Having thus delivered herself she resumed her seat, and went on sharpening her tools with a rasping, piercing noise, which filled in the pauses in the conversation, performing the duties of the chorus in the old Greek tragedies, at the expense of the ears of the travellers.

“The woman is surely mad,” the keeper muttered to himself, unable to explain the ill-effect of his flattery on any other hypothesis.

“Bechlie is right, my fair-haired scholar!” cried the hangman. “I shall look upon you as a serpent’s

tongue, if you make any further attempt to justify this Spiagudry."

"God forbid, master!" cried the old man; "I do not justify him in the least degree."

"All right. Besides, you have no idea how far he carries his insolence. Would you believe that the rascal has the assurance to dispute my proprietary right to Hans of Iceland?"

"To Hans of Iceland?" the hermit asked abruptly.

"Yes. Do you know that famous brigand?"

"I do," the hermit replied.

"Well, every brigand falls to the hangman, does n't he? But what does that infernal Spiagudry do, but ask to have a reward offered for Hans's head."

"He asks to have a reward offered for Hans's head?" the hermit repeated.

"He has the impudence to do just that; and for no other reason than that the body may come to him, and I be cheated out of my property."

"That is most infamous, master Orugix; to dare to dispute your right to property which so evidently belongs to you."

These words were accompanied by a malicious smile which made Spiagudry's blood run cold.

"And the trick is so much the baser, hermit, because I need to have an execution like that of Hans to draw me from my obscurity, and make the fortune which I failed to make by beheading Schumacker."

"Really, Master Nychol?"

"Yes, brother hermit; come to see me on the day

Hans is arrested, and we will sacrifice a fat pig to my future elevation."

"With pleasure; but how do you know that I shall be at liberty then? Besides, you consigned all ambition to the devil just now."

"Of course, father, when I see that a Spiagudry and a request for a reward to be offered are enough to destroy my fondest hopes."

"Ah!" the hermit exclaimed in an altered voice, "Spiagudry asked that a reward be offered!"

That voice had the same effect on the poor man that the gaze of a toad has on a bird.

"Good sirs," he said, "why judge hastily? That is n't certain; it may be a false report."

"A false report!" cried Orugix; "it's only too certain. The request of the syndics is at Drontheim at this moment, supported by the signature of the keeper of the Spladgest. It only awaits the signature of his Excellency the governor."

The hangman was so well informed that Spiagudry dared not pursue his justification; he contented himself with cursing his young companion inwardly for the hundredth time. But what were his sensations when he heard the hermit, after some moments of apparent meditation, suddenly ask in a tone of raillery:—

"Master Nychol, what is the punishment of sacrilege?"

These words acted upon Spiagudry much as if his wig and plaster had been torn off. He anxiously awaited the reply of Orugix, who emptied his glass first.

“It depends upon what variety of sacrilege it is ;” he said.

“Suppose it is the mutilation of a corpse ? ”

The trembling Benignus expected from moment to moment to hear his own name issue from the lips of the mysterious hermit.

“Formerly,” said Orugix, coolly, “the offender was buried alive with the mutilated corpse.”

“And now ? ”

“Now the punishment is milder.”

“It is milder ! ” repeated Spiagudry, whose breath had almost left his body.

“Yes,” continued the hangman, with the careless, well-satisfied air of an artist speaking of his art ; “in the first place they brand him, with a hot iron, with a letter S on the fat part of his leg.”

“And then ? ” interrupted the old keeper, upon whom it would have been difficult to execute that part of the punishment.

“Then they do nothing more than hang him.”

“Merciful God ! ” cried Spiagudry ; “hang him ! ”

“Well, well, what’s the matter with the man ? he looks at me just as the patient looks at the gibbet.”

“I am glad to learn,” said the hermit, “that there has been a return to humane methods.”

At that moment, the storm having ceased, they heard very distinctly the clear note of a horn outside.

“Nychol,” said the woman, “they are pursuing some criminal ; that is the archers’ horn.”

“The archers’ horn ! ” echoed the host and his

guests, each with a different accent, and Spiagudry with the utmost consternation.

The exclamation was hardly out of their mouths when there was a loud knocking at the door of the tower.

XIII.

It needs but a man to give the word ; the elements of a revolution are all prepared. Who will begin ? As soon as there is a rallying-point, the grand crash will come. — BONAPARTE.

LÆVIG is a large town on the northern bank of Drontheim Fiord, lying at the foot of a low chain of treeless hills, whose slopes have the appearance of great pieces of mosaic on the horizon, so curiously diversified in color are the crops grown upon them.

It is not an attractive town ; the wooden, rush-covered cabins of the fishermen, the conical huts of earth and small stones, in which the invalid miner passes the brief old age during which his modest savings permit him to enjoy rest and the sunshine, the rickety, deserted framework which the chamois-hunter covers with a thatched roof, and walls made of the skins of animals, line the streets whose narrow windings make them longer than the town itself. On a square, where nothing but the remains of a large tower are to be seen to-day, then stood the old fortress built by Horda the Archer, Lord of Lœvig, and brother in arms of the pagan king Halfdan ; it was occupied in 1698 by the syndic of the town, who was its most comfortably lodged inhabitant, with the possible exception of the silver stork which perched every summer at the top of the pointed church-spire,

like a white pearl at the peak of a mandarin's pointed cap.

On the morning of Ordener's arrival at Drontheim, a traveller, also travelling *incognito*, landed at Lœvig. His gilded litter, although without arms, and his four tall lackeys armed to the teeth, suddenly became the engrossing subject of conversation and of universal curiosity. Mine host of the Golden Gull, a small tavern at which the traveller alighted, assumed a mysterious air, and replied to all inquiries, "I don't know," with a knowing look which said as plainly as possible, "I know all about it, but you shall know nothing." The tall lackeys were dumber than fish, and more forbidding than the mouth of a mine. The syndic at first shut himself up in his tower, waiting with due dignity for the stranger to call upon him, but soon the good people of the town were surprised to see him present himself twice to no purpose at the door of the Golden Gull, and in the evening watch for an opportunity to salute the stranger as he leaned from his partly opened window. The gossips inferred from that that the personage had made known his high rank to the worthy syndic. They were mistaken. A messenger from the stranger had called upon the syndic to have his passport countersigned, and the syndic noticed that the great seal of green wax upon the packet bore two hands of justice clasped, supporting a mantle of ermine surmounted by a count's coronet upon a shield, beside which hung the collars of the Elephant and Dannebrog. This was enough for the syndic, who was extremely anxious to obtain the appointment of syndic for the whole

province of Drontheim from the chancellor's office. But his advances were thrown away, for the unknown nobleman refused to see any one.

The second day after his arrival at Lœvig was drawing to a close, when the landlord entered his room, and said, with a most humble inclination, that the messenger whom his Excellency awaited, had arrived.

"Very well," said his Excellency, "let him come up."

An instant later the person referred to came in, carefully closed the door, and bowed to the floor before the stranger, who had turned half-around toward him; then he waited in respectful silence until he should be addressed.

"I hoped to see you this morning," said the earlier arrival; "what detained you?"

"Your Grace's interests, Herr Count; have I anything else at heart?"

"What is Elphega doing, and Frederic?"

"They are both well."

"Well! well!" exclaimed the master impatiently, "have you nothing more interesting to tell me? What is there new at Drontheim?"

"Nothing except that Baron von Thorvick arrived there yesterday."

"Yes, I know that he chose to consult that old Mecklemburger Levin concerning the projected marriage. Do you know the result of his interview with the governor?"

"To-day at noon, when I left, he had not seen him."

"What! and he arrived last night! You surprise me, Musdœmon. Had he seen the countess?"

"He had not, my lord."

"Whom did he see then, — you?"

"No, my noble master; besides, I do not know him."

"How do you know that he's at Drontheim, if nobody has seen him?"

"From his servant, who got down at the governor's palace yesterday."

"Well, did he get down somewhere else?"

"His servant says that immediately upon his arrival he took a boat for Munckholm, after a visit to the Spladgest."

The count took fire at once.

"For Munckholm! Schumacker's place of confinement! Are you sure of it? I always thought that the virtuous Levin was a traitor. For Munckholm! What attraction is there there? Did he go to take counsel of Schumacker? Did he go —"

"My noble lord," Musdœmon interrupted, "it is not certain that he went there."

"What? why did you tell me so then? Are you making sport of me?"

"Pardon, your Grace, I simply repeated what the baron's servant said. But Herr Frederic, who was on duty yesterday at the donjon, did not see Baron Ordener."

"Convincing proof that is! My son does n't know the viceroy's son. Ordener might have entered the fortress in disguise."

"True my lord ; but Herr Frederic declares that he saw nobody."

The count seemed to grow calmer.

"That puts a different face on the matter ; does my son really say that ?"

"He told me so three different times ; and in that regard Herr Frederic's interest is identical with your Grace's."

This suggestion completely restored the count's equanimity.

"Ah !" he said, "I understand. The baron, when he arrived, chose to take a little sail on the fiord, and his servant concluded that he was going to Munckholm. After all, why should he go there ? I was an idiot to take alarm. My son-in-law's lack of eagerness to see old Levin proves that his affection for him is not so deep as I feared. You would hardly believe, my dear Musdœmon," continued the count, with a smile, "that I had already imagined Ordener in love with Ethel Schumacker, and had constructed a fine romance of love and intrigue on the basis of this voyage to Munckholm. But thank God, Ordener is not so mad as I am myself. — By the way, my dear fellow, how is that young Danaë faring in Frederic's hands ?"

Musdœmon had felt the same fears that his master expressed touching Ethel Schumacker, and fought against them, but did not succeed in overcoming them so easily as the count. However, he was so delighted to see his master smile that he was very careful not to disturb his sense of security, but sought rather to deepen it, in order to confirm him

at the same time in the tranquil frame of mind which is of so much importance to the favorites of the great.

"Noble count," he said, "your son has failed to captivate Schumacker's daughter, but it seems that another has been more fortunate."

The count interrupted him abruptly.

"Another! what other?"

"Oh! some serf or other, — peasant or vassal, I don't know which."

"Do you mean what you say?" cried the count, his stern, forbidding face beaming with joy.

"Herr Frederic told the noble countess so, as well as myself."

The count rose, and walked back and forth, rubbing his hands.

"Muscœmon, my dear Muscœmon, one more effort, and our object is accomplished. The branch of the tree is blighted; it only remains for us to overthrow the trunk. Have you any other good news?"

"Dispolsen has been murdered."

The last wrinkle disappeared from the count's brow.

"Ah! you see how we go on from triumph to triumph. Did they get his papers? above all did they get the iron box?"

"I am very sorry to tell your Grace that the murder was not done by our people. He was killed and robbed on the beach at Urchtal, and the deed is attributed to Hans of Iceland."

"Hans of Iceland!" echoed the master, whose

face had become clouded again ; “ what ! the notorious outlaw whom we thought of putting at the head of our revolt ! ”

“ The same, noble count ; and I am afraid, from what I have heard to-day, that we shall have difficulty in finding him. In that event, I have made sure of a leader, who will take his name and replace him. He is a wild mountaineer, tall and strong as an oak, fierce and bold as a wolf in a snow desert ; a formidable giant who needs must resemble Hans of Iceland.”

“ Is this Hans of Iceland a tall man ? ”

“ That is the general opinion, your Grace.”

“ I always admire the skill with which you lay your plans, my dear Musdœmon. When is the rebellion to break out ? ”

“ Oh ! very soon, your Grace ; it may have come to a head at this moment. The royal wardship has long been a burden to the miners ; and they all grasped eagerly at the idea of a rising. The trouble will begin at Guldbranshal, and will extend to Sund-Moër, and thence to Kongsberg. Two thousand miners may be on foot within three days. The rising will be in Schumacker’s name ; our emissaries always claim to speak in his name. The reserve forces of the South and the garrison of Drontheim will show signs of revolt, and you will be here on the spot to crush the rebellion *instantly*, — thus performing a new and signal service in the king’s eyes, — and also to deliver him from Schumacker, whose existence is a constant menace to his throne. Upon such indestructible foundations will be reared the

edifice of your greatness, to be fitly crowned by the marriage of your daughter with the Baron von Thorvick."

A confidential interview between two rascals is never of long duration, because what little manliness there may be in them soon takes fright at sight of the devil's tail. When two corrupt souls reveal their shamelessness to each other, their mutual ugliness arouses mutual disgust. Crime in another horrifies a criminal; and two villains who discuss, in a cynical tête-à-tête, their passions, their pleasures, and their interests are like a terrifying mirror, each to the other. Their own baseness reflected in another humiliates them, their own pride confounds them, their own insignificance frightens them; and they cannot escape, cannot disavow the likeness; for every hateful suggestion, every frightful coincidence, every hideous parallel finds within them a tireless voice which unerringly points out the resemblance. However secret their interview may be, it has always two discerning witnesses,—God, whom they see not, and conscience which they feel.

Confidential conversation with Musdæmon was the more wearisome to the count because he always tactlessly treated him as equally involved with himself in their schemes, whether already under way, or only projected. Many courtiers think it clever to screen their more eminent confederates from apparent complicity in their evil deeds; they assume the responsibility for the harm that is done, and often allow their patron's sense of shame the consolation of having seemed to decline to take part in a profitable

crime. Musdœmon, with over-refined shrewdness, followed the opposite course. He rarely chose to appear to advise, but rather to obey. He knew his master's mind, as his master knew his; and so he never compromised himself without compromising the count. The head which the count would have been most supremely pleased to see fall, after Schumacker's, was Musdœmon's; Musdœmon knew it, too, as well as if his master had told him so, and his master knew that he knew it.

The count had learned all he wished to know. He was satisfied. His only remaining desire was to dismiss Musdœmon.

"MUSDœmon," he said with a gracious smile, "you are the most faithful and most zealous of my servants. All goes well, and I owe it to your labors. I make you confidential secretary of the grand chancellor's department."

MUSDœmon bowed low.

"That is not all," the count continued, "I mean to ask for the Dannebrog for you a third time; but I fear that your birth, your unworthy relative —"

MUSDœmon flushed, then turned pale, and hid his changes of color by bowing once more.

"Go, Herr Confidential Secretary," said the count, giving him his hand to kiss, "and prepare your petition. It may find the king in good humor."

"Whether his Majesty grants it, or not, I am both proud and confused at your Grace's kindness."

"Make haste, my dear fellow, for I am in a hurry to leave. We must try to obtain definite information about this Hans."

Musdæmon bowed a third time, and opened the door.

“Oh! by the way,” said the count, “I forgot — As confidential secretary you will write to the chancellor’s office to send the syndic of Lœvig his dismissal; he compromises the dignity of his position by all sorts of discourtesy to strangers.”

XIV.

Guardian of the good and brave,
Their banner o'er thy shrine we wave!
Monk who counts the midnight bead,
Knight who spurs the battle steed,
He who dies 'mid clarion's swelling,
He who dies 'mid requiem's knelling —
Alike thy care, whose grace is shed
On cowed scalp and helmed head.

MATURIN: *Bertram*, — *Hymn to St. Anselm*.

“YES, master, we certainly ought to make a pilgrimage to the cave of Lynrass. Who would have thought that that hermit, whom I was inwardly cursing as a devil from hell, would prove my guardian angel, and that the lance which seemed at every moment to threaten our lives, would serve as a bridge for us to cross the abyss?”

In such terms, with superabundance of grotesque metaphor, did Benignus Spiagudry burden Ordener's ears with his exuberant admiration and gratitude for the mysterious hermit. Our friends, as the reader may guess, had left the Accursed Tower, and when we join them again, they had left the hamlet of Vyglā far behind, and were toiling laboriously up a steep road, abounding in pools of water, and great rocks which the tremendous downpour of the recent storm had left stranded in the muddy soil.

It was not yet daylight, but the thickets atop of the cliffs on either side of the road were beginning to stand out against the lightening sky, and objects, still without color, were assuming their proper shapes in the dull, and, if we may so say, dense light, which the dawn in northern countries sends athwart the cool mists of the morning.

Ordener said nothing, for he had been for some moments lost in that sort of half-sleep which the mechanical movement of walking sometimes permits. He had not slept since the early morning of the previous day, when he devoted to repose in a fishing boat anchored in Drontheim harbor the few hours which elapsed between his departure from the Spladgest and his second visit to Munckholm. And so, while his body was going on toward Skongen, his mind flew back to Drontheim Fiord, to that gloomy prison beneath the sombre towers which contained the only being in the world, the thought of whom meant hope and happiness to him. The memory of his Ethel filled all his waking thoughts, and when he slept her image was the central figure in all his dreams. In that other life of sleep, when for a moment the soul alone exists, when the physical organization with all its gross materialism seems to have vanished, he saw the beloved maiden, not lovelier or purer, but happier and more free, more entirely his.

But on the Skongen road this forgetfulness of his surroundings and this torpor of his faculties could not but be incomplete; for from time to time he stumbled into holes, or over stones and branches of

trees, and was abruptly brought back from imagination to stern reality. At such times he would raise his head, half open his wearied eyes, and deplore the regression from his charming journey in the air to the painful earthly journey, where he had nothing to compensate him for his vanished illusions save the sense of feeling against his heart the lock of hair which at least was his, pending the time when Ethel should belong entirely to him. That thought would bring back the same dear image to his mind once more, and he would insensibly fall a-dreaming as before.

"Master," Spiagudry repeated in a louder tone, which combined with the shock of stumbling over a tree trunk, to bring Ordener to himself. "Master, we have nothing to fear. When they left the tower the archers turned to the right with the hermit, and we are far enough from them to venture to speak, although it was more prudent to keep silence hitherto."

"Really," said Ordener, with a yawn, "you carry prudence a little farther than you need. It's at least three hours since we left the tower and the archers."

"That is true, my lord ; but prudence never does any harm. Just suppose that I had responded when the leader of that infernal squad demanded Benignus Spiagudry, in a voice like that in which Saturn demanded his new-born son, to devour him ; suppose that I had not then had recourse to a discreet and prudent silence, where should I be now, my noble master ?"

"Faith, old man, I don't think any one could

have got your name from you at that moment, even if he had used red-hot pincers for the purpose."

"Was I wrong, master? If I had spoken, the hermit, — whom may St. Hospitius and St. Usbald the recluse bless, — the hermit would not have had time to ask the leader of the archers if his detachment did not consist of soldiers from the garrison of Munckholm, — an unimportant question, asked solely to gain time. Did you notice, my young sir, the curious smile on the hermit's face when he invited that fool of an archer, after his affirmative response, to follow him, saying that he knew whither Benignus Spiagudry had fled? "

The keeper paused for a moment, as if for a fresh start, then suddenly resumed, in a tone of lachrymose enthusiasm : —

"Good priest ! worthy and virtuous anchorite, who puts in practice the principles of Christian humanity and angelic charity ! And to think that I was alarmed at his exterior, which was certainly most forbidding, when it concealed such a generous heart ! Did you notice also, my noble master, that there was something peculiar in the tone in which he said to me, 'Till we meet again,' as he led the archers away ? At another time that tone would have frightened me ; but it is not the pious and excellent hermit's fault. It is solitude, doubtless, which imparts that strange quality to the voice ; for I know, my lord " — here Spiagudry let his voice drop — " I know another man who lives quite alone, — the redoubtable — But no, out of respect for the worshipful hermit of Lynrass, I will not make that hateful

comparison. Nor is there anything so very strange about his gloves; the weather is cold enough for him to wear them. His saline beverage does n't surprise me either, — Catholic recluses often have strange rules of conduct! Indeed, master, this very one is noticed in this verse of the famous Urensius, the monk of the Caucasus: —

‘Rivos despiciens, maris undam potat amaram.’

Why did n't I remember that verse when we were in that cursed ruin at Vyglá? — a little more memory would have saved me a good deal of useless terror. To be sure it is hard, is it not, master, to keep one's head clear in such a den, seated at a hangman's festive board? A hangman! a being dedicated to the scorn and execration of his kind, who differs from the murderer only in the frequency of his murders and his impunity therefor, and in whose heart the atrocious villany of the most hardened criminals is combined with the cowardice which is inconsistent with their daring exploits! A being who offers his guests food and drink with the same hand which applies the instrument of torture, and makes a poor wretch's bones crack between the planks of a cheval! To breathe the same air with a hangman! And the vilest beggar, if he has chanced to brush against him, casts aside with horror the last rags which protect his sores and his nakedness against the frosts of winter! And the chancellor, after he has sealed the patent of his appointment, throws the seals under the table in token of loathing and detestation! And in France, when the hangman dies, the

sergeants of the prefecture prefer to pay a fine of forty livres rather than succeed him! Why, at Pesth, one Chorchill, condemned to death, was offered his pardon if he would accept the office of executioner, and he preferred the rôle of sufferer! Have you never heard, my young master, that Turmeryn, Bishop of Maëstricht, ordered a church that a hangman had visited to be disinfected, and that the Czarina Petrovna washed her face every time that she returned from an execution? You must know also that the kings of France, to do honor to their warriors, decreed that any crimes they might commit should be punished by their comrades, so that these noble men, even when they were criminals, should not be rendered infamous by the touch of the hangman. And lastly (and this is decisive of the matter), in the "Descent of St. George to Hell," by the learned Melasius Iturham, does not Charon give Robin Hood the brigand precedence over Philipcrass the hangman? Upon my word, master, if ever I become powerful — and God alone knows if I ever shall — I will put down executioners, and re-establish the former customs and the old rates. For the murder of a prince, the rate will be, as in 1150, fourteen hundred and forty royal double crowns; for the murder of a count, fourteen hundred and forty single crowns; for that of a baron, fourteen hundred and forty low crowns; the murder of a simple gentleman will be taxed at fourteen hundred and forty ascalins, and that of a common citizen —"

"Do I not hear the step of a horse approaching?" Ordener interposed.

They turned their heads, and as the day had

broken during Spiagudry's long scientific disquisition, they could see, some hundred paces behind them, a man dressed in black, signalling to them with one hand, and with the other urging forward one of the little dirty-white horses which are so common, both wild and broken, in the foot-hills of Norway.

"For Heaven's sake, master," exclaimed the timid keeper, "let us hurry on ; that black man looks to me very much like an archer."

"Nonsense, old man ! there are two of us, and should we run away from a single man ?"

"Alas ! twenty hawks will run away from a single owl. What glory is there in awaiting an officer of justice ?"

"How do you know that he is one ?" said Orderer, whose eyes were not blinded by fear. "Take courage, my good guide ; I know this man. Let us stop."

Spiagudry had no choice but to comply, and in a moment the horseman was beside them. Spiagudry ceased to tremble when he recognized the grave and serene countenance of Athanasius Munder, the chaplain.

He saluted them with a smile, and checked his steed, saying, in a voice which his breathless condition rendered somewhat broken : —

"My dear children, I am retracing my steps on your account ; and I am sure that the Lord will not permit my prolonged absence, in view of my charitable purpose, to be prejudicial to those to whom my presence might be beneficial."

“Herr Minister,” Ordener replied, “we shall be glad if we can serve you in any way.”

“On the other hand, my noble young sir, it is myself who hope to serve you. Will you deign to tell me the object of your journey?”

“I cannot, Herr Chaplain.”

“I trust, my son, that you really cannot, and that your answer is not due to distrust of me. For in that case, woe is me! — woe to him of whom the good man is distrustful even when he has seen him but once!”

The humility and earnestness of the good priest touched Ordener deeply.

“All that I can tell you, my worthy father, is that we propose to visit the mountains in the north.”

“That is what I thought, my son, and that is why I came after you. There are in those mountains parties of miners and hunters, whom it is often dangerous for travellers to encounter.”

“Well?”

“Why — I know that it is fruitless to try to dissuade a young nobleman, who is determined to court danger, but the esteem which I have conceived for you suggests to me another way of being of service to you. The unfortunate counterfeiter to whom I administered the last consolations of religion yesterday had been a miner. As he breathed his last he handed me this parchment, upon which his name is written, saying that it would protect me from all danger if I ever chanced to travel among those mountains. Alas! of what use could such a safe-conduct be to a priest who will live and die with the prisoners, and who, furthermore, should desire no defence *inter castra latronum* save that afforded by

patience and prayer, God's only weapons? My only reason for not refusing the pass was my reluctance to wound a man who, a few seconds hence, would do no more giving or receiving on this earth. My acceptance of it was a blessed inspiration from on high, for to-day I am able to give it to you, so that it may be your constant companion throughout your hazardous journey, and the gift of the dying man may be of use to the traveller."

Ordener accepted the minister's present with deep emotion.

"Herr Chaplain," he said, "God grant that your desire may be fulfilled! Thanks! But," he added, putting his hand to his sword, "I carry my passport at my side."

"Young man," said the minister, "perhaps this flimsy parchment will be a better protection than your good blade. A penitent's glance is more mighty than the sword of the archangel. Adieu. My prisoners are expecting me. I beg you pray sometimes for them and for me."

"Holy priest," said Ordener, with a smile, "I said that your condemned men should have their pardon; I repeat it."

"Oh! do not speak so confidently, my son. Do not tempt the Lord. No man knows what is going on in another man's heart, and you cannot know what the viceroy's son will decide. Perhaps he will never condescend to give audience to a humble chaplain. Adieu, my son; may your journey be crowned with success, and may your kind heart sometimes remember the poor priest, and pray for the poor prisoners."

XV.

Hugo, well met. Does e'en thy age bear memory of so terrible storm? — MATURIN: *Bertram*.

IN a room adjoining the governor's apartments in his palace at Drontheim, three of his Excellency's secretaries had just taken their seats at a black table strewn with parchments, paper, seals, and writing materials. Beside them was a fourth stool, unoccupied, indicating that one of their number was behindhand. After they had been sitting for some time, considering and writing, one of them cried: —

“Do you know, Wapherney, that that poor librarian, Foxtipp, is to be dismissed by the bishop, as a result of the petition of Doctor Anglyvius, which you seconded?”

“What are you saying, Richard?” quickly rejoined that one of the other secretaries whom Richard did not address. “Wapherney could not have written in favor of Anglyvius, for that worthy's petition disgusted the general when I read it to him.”

“So you told me, said Wapherney; “but I found the word *tribuatur* on the petition, in his Excellency's hand.”

“Do you mean it?” the other cried.

“Yes, my dear fellow ; and several others of his Excellency’s decisions, of which you have spoken to me, have been changed when the minutes appeared. For instance, on the miners’ petition the general wrote : *Negetur*.

“What? why, I can’t understand it at all ; the general was very apprehensive of the turbulent spirit of the miners.”

“Perhaps he preferred to awe them by severe measures. I am led to believe that, because Chaplain Munder’s petition for the pardons of the twelve condemned men is also denied.”

The secretary to whom Wapherney was speaking rose suddenly from his stool.

“Oh, no ! I can’t believe you. The governor is too good-hearted, and has shown too much compassion for these men, to — ”

“Very well, Arthur,” retorted Wapherney, “read for yourself.”

Arthur took the document, and saw the inexorable mark of rejection.

“Really,” he said, “I can hardly credit my own eyes. I mean to present the petition to the general again. What day did his Excellency hand down his minutes ? ”

“Three days since, I think,” said Wapherney.

“It was during the morning preceding the brief appearance and mysteriously sudden disappearance of Baron Ordener,” observed Richard, in an undertone.

“Look ! ” cried Wapherney, hastily, before Arthur had time to reply, “if there isn’t a *tribuatur* on Benignus Spiagudry’s burlesque petition also ! ”

Richard laughed heartily.

“That’s the old keeper of dead bodies, whose disappearance was equally singular and sudden, is it not?”

“Yes,” Arthur replied; “a mutilated body was found in his charnel-house, so that the authorities are on his track on a charge of sacrilege. But a little Laplander, who was his servant and was left quite alone at the Spladgest, believes, in common with all the people, that the devil carried him off as a sorcerer.”

“He’s a personage who leaves an excellent reputation behind him at all events,” said Wapherney, with a laugh.

His merriment had hardly subsided when the fourth secretary entered the room.

“’Pon honor, Gustavus, you’re very late this morning. You don’t happen to have been married yesterday, do you?”

“Oh, no!” laughed Wapherney, “he simply took the longest way around, so as to pass under the fair Rosily’s windows with his new cloak.”

“I only wish your guess were accurate, Wapherney,” said the new-comer. “But the cause of my delay is much less agreeable; and I doubt whether my new cloak produced much effect on the persons I have been calling upon.”

“Where have you been, pray?” Arthur asked him.

“To the Spladgest.”

“As God is my witness,” cried Wapherney, throwing down his pen, “we were this moment speaking of it! But, though one may speak of the place to

pass the time away, I can't conceive how any one can enter it."

"And even less, how any one can stop there," added Richard. "But, pray, tell us what you saw there, my dear Gustavus?"

"Oh, yes!" said Gustavus, "you are curious enough to hear, if not to see; and you would be well punished if I should refuse to describe to you these horrors, which you would shudder to witness."

The three secretaries earnestly besought him to speak, and although he required a little urging, he was in reality little less eager to tell them what he had seen than they were to hear it.

"Well, Wapherney, you can repeat my tale to your young sister, who is so fond of blood-curdling things. I was led to go to the Spladgest by the crowd which was hurrying thither. They had just taken in the bodies of three soldiers of the Munckholm regiment and two archers, which were found yesterday in the ravines four leagues away, at the foot of the precipice of Cascadthymore. Some of the spectators declared that the unfortunate fellows formed the squad that was sent, three days since, toward Skongen, in pursuit of the fugitive keeper of the Spladgest. If that is true, it is hard to imagine how so many armed men could have been murdered. The extreme mutilation of the bodies seemed to indicate that they were thrown from the top of the cliffs. It makes one's hair stand on end."

"Did you see them, Gustavus?" asked Wapherney.

"I had them right under my eyes."

"Is there any clue to the perpetrators of the deed?"

“Some think that it might have been done by a band of miners, and they say that they heard them signalling to one another with horns yesterday in the mountains.”

“Really?” said Arthur.

“Yes; but an old peasant destroyed that theory by calling attention to the fact that there are neither mines nor miners in the neighborhood of Cascadthymore.”

“Then who could it have been?”

“Nobody knows; if any of the limbs were gone, we might believe it was done by wild beasts, for there are long deep scratches upon all of them. The same is true of the dead body of an old man with a white beard, who was brought to the Spladgest day before yesterday morning, immediately after the terrible storm which prevented my dear Leander, Wapherney, from paying a visit to his Hero at Larsynn on the other side of the fiord.”

“Good! good! Gustavus,” laughed Wapherney; “but who is the old man?”

“By his great height, his long white beard, and the rosary still tightly grasped in his hand, although he was stripped bare of everything else, some claim to identify him as a certain hermit of the neighborhood, — the hermit of Lynrass, I think they call him. It is clear that this poor man too was murdered, but for what object? Men’s throats are not cut nowadays for their religious beliefs, and the poor hermit owned nothing in the world but his stuff frock and universal good-will.”

“And you say,” said Richard, “that his body,

like those of the soldiers, is torn as if by a wild beast's claws?"

"Yes, my dear fellow; and a fisherman swears that he noticed similar marks on the body of an officer found murdered on the beach at Urchtal some days ago."

"It's very strange," said Arthur.

"It's perfectly frightful," said Richard.

"Come, come," interposed Wapherney, "silence and work, for I think the general will soon be here. My dear Gustavus, I am very curious to see these bodies; if you are willing we will go to the Spladgest for a moment when we go away this evening."

XVI.

And she,
In unsuspecting innocence a child,
Hard by that torrent's banks, in tiny cot,
Upon her little patch of mountain lea,
With all her homely joys and cares, begot
And bounded in that little world.
And I the abhorr'd of God, — 't was not
Enough that down with me I whirl'd
The rifted rocks, and shatter'd them! I must
Drag her, her and her peace into the dust!
Thou, Hell, must have this sacrifice perforce!

GOETHE: *Faust*, translated by THEODORE MARTIN.

IN 1675, some twenty-four years before the date of this story, the hamlet of Thoctree decked itself in its gayest holiday attire for the wedding of sweet Lucy Pelnryh, and handsome, strong, and manly Caroll Stadt. You see they had been long in love with each other; and how could any heart fail to show its deep interest in the two young lovers on the day when all their ardent wishes and all their anxious hopes were to be exchanged for unalloyed happiness? Born in the same village they were, and brought up in the same neighborhood, and very often in their childhood Caroll had fallen asleep, tired with play, in Lucy's arms, and very often, in their youth, Lucy, when their work was done, had leaned on Caroll's arm. Lucy was the prettiest and shyest maiden in all the countryside, and Caroll the bravest and manliest of all the boys in the canton;

they loved one another, and they could no more have remembered when they began to love than when they began to breathe.

But their marriage did not come about as their love came, insensibly and of itself. There were family interests and animosities, hard-hearted parents, and other obstacles ; for a whole year they had been separated, and Carroll had suffered bitterly far from his Lucy, even as Lucy had wept at the enforced separation from her Carroll, before the happy day arrived which was to make them one, thenceforth to suffer and weep no more apart.

Carroll finally obtained his Lucy's hand by rescuing her from a great danger. One day he heard a woman shrieking in the woods ; it turned out to be Lucy, whom a famous brigand, the terror of all the mountaineers, had taken by surprise, and evidently proposed to carry away with him. Carroll gallantly attacked this monster with a human face, who was known by the name of Hans, on account of the singular roar, like that of a wild beast, which he was accustomed to utter. Yes, he attacked that creature, whom no other dared attack ; but love endowed him with a lion's strength. He rescued his beloved Lucy and restored her to her father, and her father gave her to him.

Joy beamed in the eyes of every man, woman, and child in the village, when the day dawned which was to unite these loving hearts. Lucy alone seemed depressed. Never had she gazed with deeper affection upon her dear Carroll ; but her glance was as sad as it was tender, and, amid the universal joy,

was the subject of much wondering comment. From one moment to another the love which her eyes expressed became more mixed with pain, in proportion as her lover's happiness seemed to soar higher and higher.

"Ah! my Lucy," said Caroll, when the ceremony was at an end, "the existence of that brigand, which is a misfortune for the whole country, is the source of my good fortune!"

The guests noticed that Lucy shook her head and made no reply.

Night came; the newly married pair were left to themselves in their new cabin, and the dances and games were continued with renewed vigor on the public square, to celebrate their new-born felicity.

The next morning Caroll Stadt had disappeared; a few lines written by him were handed to Lucy Pelnryh's father by a hunter from the Kole Mountains, who met him before dawn, wandering on the shore of the fiord. Old Will Pelnryh showed the paper to the pastor and the syndic. Nothing remained of the festivities of the preceding day, save the hopeless gloom and despair of Lucy.

This mysterious catastrophe threw the whole village into consternation, and many fruitless attempts were made to explain it. Prayers for Caroll's soul were said in the same church in which he had himself but a few days before sung hymns of thanksgiving for his great happiness. No one knew how the widow Stadt endured her ruined life. After nine months of solitude and mourning, she brought a son into the world, and the same day the village of

Golyn was wiped out of existence by the huge rock which overhung it.

The birth of her son did not drive away the mother's heart-breaking sorrow. Gill Stadt gave no promise of bearing any resemblance to Carroll. His wild boyhood seemed to portend a yet wilder manhood. Sometimes a fierce little man, whom the mountaineers, who saw him at a distance, claimed to identify as the notorious Hans of Iceland, visited the solitary cabin of Carroll's widow, and those who passed it by at such times heard a woman's groans, and roaring like a tiger's within. The man would come out with young Gill, and after the lapse of months would bring him back to his mother more forbidding and repellent than ever.

The widow Stadt's feeling for the child was a mixture of horror and affection. Sometimes she would strain him to her mother's heart as if he were the only tie which still bound her to life; at other times she would turn from him in terror, and call upon Carroll, her dear Carroll. Nobody on earth knew how her heart was torn.

Gill had passed his twenty-third year, when he saw Guth Stersen, and fell madly in love with her. Guth Stersen was rich and he was poor. Thereupon he started for Røraas to work in the mines, and amass wealth. Since then his mother had heard nothing of him.

One night she was sitting by the spinning-wheel which supplied her with bread, with her lamp burning dimly, beneath the roof which had grown old as she had in solitude and mourning, a dumb

witness of the mysteries of her wedding night. She was thinking anxiously of her son, whose presence, for which she longed so ardently, would inevitably remind her of all her sorrow, and perhaps bring more upon her. The poor mother loved her son, ungrateful as he was. Indeed, how could she fail to love him?—she had suffered so much for him.”

She rose, and took from an old chest of drawers a rusty, dust-covered crucifix. For a moment she gazed imploringly at it; then suddenly threw it from her in dismay.

“Pray!” she cried; “is prayer possible for me? Wretched woman, you have only hell to appeal to now, for to hell you belong!”

She had relapsed into her former state of gloomy abstraction, when there was a knock at her door.

It was a rare occurrence at the widow Stadt's; for the extraordinary incidents in her life had long led the whole village of Thoctree to believe that she was in league with infernal spirits. Thus it was that no one ever went near her cottage. Strange were the superstitions of that period in that ignorant land! She owed to her misfortune the same reputation for witchcraft which the keeper of the Spladgest owed to his smattering of scientific knowledge.

“Oh! if it were my son! if it were only Gill!” she cried, as she rushed to the door.

Alas! it was not her son. It was a little hermit with a stuff frock, and with the hood pulled over his face so that nothing could be seen but his black beard.

“Holy man,” said the widow, “what do you

wish? You do not know the house at which you apply."

"Oh! yes, I do!" retorted the hermit, in a harsh, and only too well-known voice.

He tore off his gloves, his hood, and his black beard, and disclosed a villanous face, a red beard, and hands armed with long, hideous nails.

"Oh!" the widow shrieked aloud, and hid her face in her hands.

"Well, well!" said the little man, "aren't twenty-four years enough to accustom you to the sight of a spouse whom you will have to contemplate through all eternity?"

She muttered in deadly terror: "Eternity!"

"Listen, Lucy Pelnryh; I bring you news of your son."

"Of my son! Where is he? why doesn't he come?"

"He cannot."

"You say you have news of him; I thank you. Alas! perhaps you bring me good fortune at last!"

"Good fortune I do bring you," said the visitor in a hollow voice; "for you are a weak woman, and I am surprised that you could bring forth such a son. You can rejoice to your heart's content. You feared that your son would walk in my footsteps; fear no more."

"What!" cried the mother, delightedly, "do you mean that my son, my beloved Gill, has really changed?"

The hermit greeted her joy with a horrible laugh.

"Changed indeed!" he said.

“Oh! why does he not fly to my arms? Where did you see him? What was he doing?”

“He was asleep.”

“The widow, in the excess of her joy, did not remark the little man’s sinister expression, or his air of ghastly pleasantry.

“Why did you not wake him, and say to him, ‘Gill, come and see your mother’?”

“His sleep was very deep.”

“But when will he come? Tell me, I implore you, if I shall see him again soon.”

The pretended hermit drew from beneath his frock a sort of cup of strange shape.

“Come, widow,” he said, “drink to your son’s speedy return.”

The widow shrieked in horror. It was a human skull. She made a gesture of loathing, but could not utter a word.

“No, no!” the man suddenly exclaimed in a voice of thunder; “don’t turn your eyes away, woman, but look! You wish to see your son again! then look, I tell you; for this is all that remains of him.”

As he spoke, he held the bare, withered skull close to the mother’s pale lips, and the flickering rays of the lamp fell upon it.

Too much pain had seared the poor woman’s heart for a pang the more to break it. She stared stupidly into the savage villain’s face.

“Oh! for death!” she muttered faintly; “death! oh! let me die!”

“Die if you choose; but remember Thoctree wood,

Lucy Pelnryh ; remember the day when the demon, by possessing himself of your body, consigned your soul to hell ! I am the demon, Lucy, and you are my spouse for all time. Now die, if you choose."

It was a matter of common belief, in those superstitious countries, that evil spirits sometimes appeared among men to lead criminal, disaster-working lives. Hans of Iceland, among other celebrated villains, enjoyed that fearful renown. It was still believed that the woman who, by seduction or by violence, fell a victim to one of these fiends in human shape, irrevocably became his companion in damnation.

The incidents recalled by the pretended hermit seemed to remind the widow of these current ideas.

"Alas !" she moaned, "is there no way for me to put an end to my existence ? For what wrong did I do ? thou knowest, my Carroll, that I was entirely innocent. The arms of a weak girl are as nothing against the strength of a demon."

As she went on her eyes wandered, and her incoherent words seemed but the echo of the convulsive trembling of her lips.

"Yes, Carroll, since that day I have been unchaste, though innocent ; and the demon asks me if I remember that awful day ! I did not deceive thee, my Carroll, — thou didst come too late ; I was his before I was thine, alas ! And my punishment will know no end. No, my eyes will never again be blessed with the sight of thee for whom I weep. What shall I gain by dying ? If I die, I must go with this monster to a world which resembles him, the world where the wicked go. And what sin have

I committed? My misfortunes in this life will count as crimes in the life to come."

The little hermit cast a triumphant, commanding glance at her.

"Ah!" she cried, turning suddenly upon him, "tell me that your presence here is only a frightful vision; for you know that since the day of my loss, every night that your spirit has visited me has been marked by ghastly dreams and terrifying visions."

"Woman, woman, be reasonable. It is as true that you are awake now as that Gill is dead."

The memory of her former misery had momentarily banished this latest blow from her mind, but his words brought it all back.

"Oh! my son! my son!" she cried; and the tones of her voice would have moved any other than the inhuman fiend who heard her. "No, he will come back to me,—he is not dead; I cannot believe that he is dead."

"Very well! go and ask the rocks of Rœraas, which crushed his life out, and Drontheim fiord which swallowed him up."

The widow fell on her knees.

"Oh! God, great God!" she shrieked.

"Hold your peace, servant of hell!"

She obeyed.

"Do not doubt your son's death," he continued. "He was punished for the same weakness which nearly ruined his father. He allowed his heart of stone to be softened by a woman's glance. I, although I possessed you, never loved you. Your Caroll's fate has been repeated in him. My son and yours was

deceived by his betrothed, by the woman for whom he died."

"Died!" she repeated, "died! Is it really true? O Gill, thou wert born of my misery; thou wert conceived in terror and passed thy childhood in an atmosphere of mourning; thy mouth tore my bosom; as a baby, thou didst never respond to my caresses; thou didst always avoid and repulse thy mother, thy mother whose life was so lonely and deserted! Thou didst never seek to make me forget my past woes save by giving me new cause for sorrow; thou didst abandon me for the fiendish author of thy existence and my widowhood; never, Gill, through all these long years, have I owed one joyous moment to thee; and yet, my son, to-day thy death seems to me the hardest to bear of all my griefs, and to-day the memory of thee seems to bring me joy and comfort. Alas!"

She could go no further; she hid her face in her coarse black veil, and sobbed as if her heart would break.

"Weak woman!" the hermit muttered. "Conquer your grief," he continued aloud. "I mocked at mine. Listen. Lucy Pelnyrh, while you are weeping for your son, I have already begun to avenge him. His betrothed betrayed him for a soldier of the Munckholm garrison. The whole regiment shall perish by my hand. Look, Lucy Pelnyrh."

He pushed back the sleeves of his frock, and showed her his blood-stained arms.

"Yes," he said with a sort of roar, "Gill's ghost ought to take special pleasure in haunting the beach

at Urchtal and the gorges of Cascadthymore. Don't you see this blood, woman? Take comfort in it."

Suddenly, as if he remembered something which he had forgotten for a moment, he interrupted himself.

"Widow, has no one brought you an iron box from me? What! I send you gold and I bring you blood, and still you weep! Surely you do not belong to the race of men."

The widow, absorbed by her despair, made no reply.

"Well, well," he said with a savage laugh, "speechless and motionless! Do you not belong to the race of women, either, Lucy Pelnryh?"

He shook her arm to compel her attention. "Did not a messenger bring you a sealed iron box?"

The widow, bestowing her wandering attention upon him for a moment, shook her head, and relapsed into her gloomy abstraction.

"Ah! the villain!" cried the little man; "the faithless villain! Spiagudry, that gold shall cost you dear!"

He cast aside his hermit's frock, and rushed from the cabin, with a noise like that of a hyena in search of a corpse.

XVII.

My Lord, I comb my hair, weeping bitterly the while, because you leave me alone, and go off into the mountains. — *La Dame au Comte.*

ETHEL, meanwhile, passed four long, dreary days wandering alone in the gloomy garden of the Schleswig donjon, in the oratory where she had shed so many tears and offered up so many prayers, and in the long gallery, where on a certain occasion she failed to hear midnight strike. Sometimes her old father accompanied her, but she was none the less alone, for the real companion of her life was absent.

Unhappy girl! what had that pure young heart ever done to deserve such bitter misfortune? Taken from the world, deprived of all hope of honor or wealth, of the pleasures of youth and the harmless triumphs of beauty, she became an inmate of a prison-cell while she was still in her cradle. Imprisoned with her father, she saw him waste slowly away as she grew to womanhood, and to cap the climax of her woe and familiarize her with slavery in every form, love sought her out in her prison.

Still, if she could have had her Ordener by her side, what would freedom have mattered to her? Would she, indeed, have known or cared whether there did exist a world from which she was separated?

Would not her world and her heaven have been with her in that narrow donjon, beneath those frowning towers bristling with soldiers, at which the passer-by would still have cast a compassionate glance?

But, alas! for the second time, her Ordener was absent; and instead of passing with him the short but ever recurring hours in pure and sanctified endearments, she passed whole days and nights bewailing his absence, and praying for his welfare. A maiden has no source of consolation save prayer and weeping.

Sometimes she sighed for the wings of the swallow that came every morning to seek food at the barred window of her cell. Sometimes she let her thoughts follow the cloud driven rapidly northward by the wind; then she would suddenly turn her head away and cover her eyes, as if she feared that she might see a gigantic brigand appear and begin the unequal combat upon one of the distant mountains, which reared their bluish peaks upon the horizon like motionless clouds.

Oh! what a cruel thing is love, when one is separated from one's beloved! Few hearts have felt this sorrow in all its intensity, because very few hearts have sounded the deepest depths of love. At such times one loses sight, in a certain sense, of one's own existence, and creates for one's self a deathly solitude, an immense void, and imagines for the absent one a whole world of frightful dangers and delusions, peopled with hideous monsters. The diverse faculties of which our nature is made up are all lost in the one infinite craving for the being whom we miss so

bitterly, and all our surroundings are dissociated from our life. Meanwhile we breathe and walk and act, but mechanically, and without thought or volition. Like a wandering planet which has lost its sun, the body moves hither and thither at random ; the soul is elsewhere.

XVIII.

For seven brave warriors leading armed bands,
Cutting a bull's throat o'er a black-rimmed shield,
And dipping in the bull's blood with their hands,
Swore before Ares, Enyo, murderous Fear,
That they would bring destruction on our town.

ÆSCHYLUS: The Seven who Fought against Thebes.

THE coast of Norway abounds in narrow fiords, creeks, reefs, lagoons, and small headlands, so numerous that they weary the memory of the traveller, and wear out the patience of the topographer. In the olden time, if popular tradition is to be believed, every tongue of land was haunted by its own private demon, every creek had its familiar sprite, every headland its patron saint. Superstition seeks fresh food for terror by confusing all sorts of rumors. There was said to be a single spot, on the shore at Kelvel, some miles north of the cave of Walderhog, which was within the jurisdiction of no spirit, infernal, intermediary, or celestial. It was the clearing along the shore, overtopped by the cliff, atop of which could still be seen the ruins of the old manor-house of Ralph, or Radulph, the Giant. This bit of uncultivated plain, bounded on the west by the sea, and closely shut in by heath-covered cliffs, owed this immunity to the mere name of that old Norwegian squire, its former possessor. What fairy, or devil, or

angel would have dared to become the occupant or patron of a domain once occupied and patronized by Ralph the Giant?

It is true that the mere name of the redoubtable Ralph was enough to impart an evil reputation to this spot, which was wild enough of itself. But after all an evil memory is not so much to be dreaded as a spirit actually present, and no belated fisherman on mooring his skiff in Ralph's creek, had ever seen the Will o' the Wisp laughing and dancing among the ghosts on top of a rock, nor the fairy dashing through the heather in her chariot of phosphorus drawn by iridescent moths, nor the saint rising up to heaven after his prayer.

If, however, on the night following the great storm, the waves and the wind had permitted some storm-tossed mariner to sail into that hospitable inlet, he might have been seized with superstitious dread at sight of three men who were sitting around a great fire, kindled in the centre of the level space.

Two of them wore the broad felt hats and wide trousers of workmen in the royal mines. Their arms were bared to the shoulder, their feet encased in buff half-boots; a red cloth belt about their waists held their curved swords and long pistols. Each of them wore a hunting horn around his neck. One was old, the other young; the thick, shaggy beard of the former, and the long hair of the latter, imparted a touch of savagery to their features, which were naturally harsh and forbidding.

By his bear-skin hat, his cloak of oiled leather, the musket slung at his back, his short, tight

breeches, bare knees, and bark sandals, and by the gleaming axe which he carried in his hand, it was easy to identify the companion of the two miners as a mountaineer of northern Norway.

Certain it is that the man who spied from afar these three strange figures upon whom the fire, blazing brightly in the fresh sea breeze, cast a fitful red glare, might well have been afraid, without necessarily believing in ghosts and demons ; it would have been enough for him to believe in robbers and to be a little richer than a poet.

The three frequently turned their faces toward the blind path, which came out into the clearing from the woods, and, so far as could be judged by such words as the wind did not render inaudible, they seemed to be awaiting the arrival of a fourth person.

"Say, Kennybol, do you know that we should n't be waiting for the Count von Griffenfeld's messenger at this time of night quite so calmly, if we were over yonder in Tulbytilbet's clearing, or down at St. Cuthbert's fiord?"

"Don't speak so loud, Jonas," said the mountaineer to the old miner ; "blessed be Ralph the Giant, who keeps the spirits away ! God forbid that I should ever put foot in Tulbytilbet's clearing ! The other day I set out to gather hawthorn, and gathered mandragora by mistake, and it began to bleed and cry, and nearly drove me mad."

The young man began to laugh.

"Upon my word, Kennybol ! I believe that the cry of the mandragora produced its full effect on your poor brain."

"Poor brain yourself!" retorted the mountaineer, angrily. "He laughs at mandragora, Jonas; he laughs like a madman playing with a skull."

"Oho!" said Jonas. "Just let him go to the cave of Walderhog, where the heads of those whom Hans, the devil from Iceland, has murdered gather every night to dance round his bed of dry leaves, and gnash their teeth to put him to sleep."

"That is true," said the mountaineer.

"But," said the younger man, "didn't Herr Hacket, whom we are waiting for, promise us that this Hans of Iceland would lead our rebellion?"

"Yes," Kannybol replied, "and with that devil's help we are sure to be too much for all the green coats of Drontheim and Copenhagen."

"So much the better!" cried the old miner; "but I won't agree, for one, to do sentry duty beside him at night."

At this moment the crackling of the dead heather beneath a man's feet engaged the attention of the three; they turned and recognized the new-comer as the light of the fire fell upon him.

"It's he! it's Herr Hacket! Welcome, Herr Hacket, you have kept us waiting; we have been here more than three quarters of an hour."

This Herr Hacket was a little fat man, dressed in black, whose jovial face had a sinister cast.

"I was delayed, my friends," he said, "by ignorance of the road, and by the necessity of proceeding very cautiously. I left Count Schumacker this morning. Here are three purses of gold which he bade me hand to you."

The two older men seized upon the gold with the avidity characteristic of the peasants of impoverished Norway. The young miner put aside the hand with which Hacket handed him the purse.

"Keep your gold, Herr Messenger," he said. "I should lie if I said that I rebel for the sake of your Count Schumacker; my object is to relieve the miners from the royal guardianship, and to provide my mother's bed with blankets that are not quite so torn and jagged as the coast of our dear Norway."

Herr Hacket did not seem to be in the least disconcerted, but replied with a smile: —

"Then I will send the money to your poor mother, my dear Norbith, so that she may have two new blankets to keep off the north wind this winter."

The young man assented with a nod, and the messenger, like a clever orator, hastened to add: —

"But be careful not to repeat what you thoughtlessly said just now, — that you are not taking up arms for Schumacker, Count von Griffenfeld."

"And yet — and yet," the two old men muttered, "we know well enough that the miners are oppressed, but we don't know this count, this prisoner of state."

"What!" the messenger rejoined quickly; "can it be that you are so ungrateful? You were groaning in your underground burrows, without light or air, without property of any sort, and practically enslaved by a most burdensome wardship! Who came to your aid? who rekindled your courage? who supplied you with money and weapons? Was it not my illustrious master, the noble Count von Griffenfeld, who is more enslaved and more wretched than you? And now,

when you are loaded with his benefactions, would you refuse to make use of them to win liberty for him and for yourselves?"

"You are right," the young miner said; "that would be very shabby dealing."

"Yes, Herr Hacket," said the old man, "we will fight for Count Schumacker."

"Courage, my friends! Rise in his name, and carry the name of your benefactor from one end of Norway to the other. Listen: everything favors your praiseworthy undertaking; you are to be relieved from the presence of a formidable adversary, General Levin von Knud, governor of the province. The secret influence of my noble master, the Count von Griffenfeld will secure his temporary recall to Bergen. Tell me, Kennybol, Jonas, and you, my dear Norbith, are all your companions in readiness?"

"My brothers at Guldbranshal," said Norbith, "are waiting only for me to give the signal. To-morrow, if you wish —"

"To-morrow, very well. It is best that the young miners, whose leader you are, should first raise the standard of revolt. How is it with you, my good Jonas?"

"Six hundred brave fellows from the Fa-roër islands, who have been living for three days on chamois meat and bear-oil in Bennallag forest, need but one blast on the horn from their old captain Jonas, of Lœvig village."

"Very good. And you, Kennybol?"

"Every man who carries a hatchet in the gorges of Kole, and climbs the cliffs without knee-pieces, is

ready to join his brothers, the miners, whenever they need him."

"That is all we need. Say to your companions, so that they may have no doubt of victory," added the messenger, raising his voice, "that Hans of Iceland will be the leader."

"Is that quite certain?" they all asked in the same breath, and in tones in which hope was not unmixed with fear.

The messenger replied:—

"Four days hence at this same hour, I will meet you all with your united forces in the mine of Apsyl-Corh, near the Lake of Smiasen, and beneath the plain of the Blue-Star. Hans of Iceland will be with me."

"We will be there," said the three leaders; "and may God not abandon those who are to have the assistance of the devil!"

"Have no fear, so far as God is concerned," said Hacket, with a sneer. "In the ruins of Crag, you will find banners for your troops. Do not forget the rallying cry: 'Long live Schumacker! Let us rescue Schumacker!' Now we must part; daylight will soon be here. But first, swear to maintain the most absolute secrecy as to what has taken place between us."

Without a word each of the three men opened a vein in his left arm with the point of his sword; then each in turn seized the messenger's hand and allowed a few drops to run down upon it.

"You have our blood!" they said.

Then the young man exclaimed: "May all my blood be shed like that which I shed myself at this

moment ; may a malevolent spirit make sport of my plans, as the tempest plays with a straw ; may my arm be as lifeless as lead to avenge an insult ; may the bats dwell in my tomb ; may I, while living, be haunted by the dead, and when dead, be profaned by the living ; may my eyes melt away in tears like a woman's, — if ever I speak of what has taken place this night in the clearing of Ralph the Giant ! May the blessed saints deign to hear what I say !

“ Amen,” echoed the two old men.

With that they went their several ways, and naught remained in the clearing save the half-burned fire, whose dying rays mounted at intervals to the top of the ruined and deserted towers of Ralph the Giant.

XIX.

Theodore. Let us fly in this direction.

Tristan. It is a bitter disgrace.

Theodore. Do you think we were recognized ?

Tristan. I know not, but I have little fear of it.

LOPE DE VEGA: *The Gardener's Dog.*

BENIGNUS SPIAGUDRY found it very difficult to fathom the motives which could induce a young man of ordinary intelligence, who apparently had a long life before him, as was the case with his travelling companion, to attack the redoubtable Hans of Iceland of his own free will. Again and again since their journey began he had cleverly led up to that question ; but the young adventurer maintained an obstinate silence as to the purpose of his journey. Nor had the poor man been any more fortunate in gratifying the curiosity which his strange companion naturally aroused in him on many other points. Once he had ventured a question as to the family and the name of his young *master*.

"Call me Ordener," was his reply, and it was uttered in a tone which forbade any rejoinder. So he was fain to be resigned to his keeping his secret ; and had not the worthy Spiagudry himself a certain mysterious box carefully packed away in the wallet under his cloak, as to which he would have considered any investigation both out of place and annoying ?

It was four days since they left Drontheim, but they had not travelled very far, partly because of the damage caused to the roads by the storm, and partly because the fugitive keeper thought it prudent to take all sorts of cross-roads and windings, in order to shun the more thickly settled regions. After leaving Skongen on their right, they reached the shore of the lake of Sparbo toward evening of the fourth day.

It was a sombre but magnificent picture, — the vast sheet of water reflecting the last rays of the sun and the first stars of the night, and framed by high cliffs, black firs, and lordly oaks. The aspect of a lake in the evening, at a short distance, sometimes produces a curious optical illusion ; it is as if a vast abyss pierced the earth from side to side and made it possible to see the sky through the opening.

Ordener stopped to gaze at the venerable druidical forests which covered the mountainous shores of the lake like a head-dress, and at the chalk huts of Sparbo scattered over the slope like a sparse flock of white kids. He listened to the far-off din of the forges,¹ mingled with the dull soughing of the majestic woods, to the intermittent cries of the birds of prey, and the harmonious murmuring of the waves. To the north, a lofty granite cliff, still lighted by the sun, towered above the little hamlet of Oëlmœ, its summit sloping beneath a mass of ruined towers, as if the giant were weary of his burden.

When the heart is sad a melancholy landscape

¹ The water of the lake of Sparbo is noted for its steel-hardening qualities.

gratifies it. Let an unhappy mortal be set down among wild and lofty mountains, by a wood-encircled lake, or in a dark forest, just as the sun is sinking, and he will view that impressive scene, that serious mood of Nature, as it were through a dark veil; it will seem to him as if the sun were not simply setting, but as if it were dying.

Ordener was musing silently, when his companion exclaimed: —

“Well, well, my young sir! it’s a fine thing to stand meditating thus by the lake which contains more flat-fish than any other in Norway.”

This remark and the gesture which accompanied it would have brought a smile to the lips of any but a lover parted from his mistress, perhaps forever.

The erudite keeper continued: —

“Allow me, at least, to rouse you from your profound revery, long enough to call your attention to the fact that the day is declining, and that we must make haste if we wish to reach the village of Oëlmœ before twilight.”

It was a timely suggestion. Ordener walked on, and Spiagudry followed him, pursuing his little-headed reflections upon the botanical and physiological phenomena which the Lake of Sparbo offered for the consideration of the naturalist.

“Herr Ordener,” said he, “if you listen to your guide, you will abandon your ill-omened enterprise; yes, you will abandon it, and will settle down here upon the shores of this remarkable lake, where we can devote our joint energies to countless learned investigations, — for example, to the search for the

stella canora palustris, a strange plant which many scientists believe to be fabulous, but which Bishop Arngrim affirms that he both saw and heard on the shores of Sparbo. In addition to that, we shall have the satisfaction of dwelling upon soil which contains more gypsum than that of any other part of Europe, to say nothing of its being a spot to which the hired assassins of the courts of Drontheim least frequently find their way. Does n't that touch your heart, my young master? Come, give up your insane journey; for your undertaking — I mean no offence — is perilous and unprofitable, *periculum sine pecunia*, that is to say, idiotic, and determined upon at a moment when you would better have been thinking of something else."

Ordener paid no attention to what the poor man said, and contributed to the conversation only the unmeaning, distraught monosyllables which great talkers take for replies. In this way they reached the village of Oëlmœ, where an unwonted stir on the public square attracted their notice.

All the inhabitants, hunters, fishermen, smiths, had left their cabins, and were grouped about a circular mound, on which three or four men were standing, one of whom was blowing a horn, and waving above his head a little black and white flag.

"It's some charlatan, doubtless," said Spiagudry, "*ambubaiarum collegia, pharmacopolæ*, who turns gold into lead, and wounds into ulcers. Let us see what hellish invention he is trying to sell these poor clowns. If these impostors would only confine their impositions to kings; if they would all imitate Borch

the Dane, and Borri the Milanese, who made such a perfect fool of our Frederic III. ;¹ but they must needs have the peasant's farthing no less than the prince's millions."

Spiagudry was in error ; as they drew nearer the mound they recognized the black robe, and round, pointed cap of a syndic ; he was surrounded by a squad of archers, and the man waving the horn was the public crier.

The fugitive keeper was much alarmed, and muttered beneath his breath : —

" Upon my soul, Herr Ordener, I hardly expected to stumble on a syndic in this out of the way place. Saint Hospitius protect me ! What is he going to say ? "

He was not kept long in suspense, for the high-pitched voice of the crier suddenly arose, and was listened to in religious silence by the people of Oëlmœ.

" In the name of his Majesty, and by order of his Excellency General Levin von Knud, governor, the provincial syndic of Drontheim hereby makes known to the people of all towns and villages : —

" 1st. That a reward of a thousand royal crowns will be paid for the head of Hans, a native of Klipstadur in Iceland, incendiary and assassin.

1. Frederic III. was the dupe of Borch or Borrichius, a Danish chemist, and a Milanese charlatan named Borri, who claimed to be the favorite of Michael the Archangel. After he had astonished Strasburg and Amsterdam with his prodigies, this impostor enlarged the sphere of his ambition, and the audacity of his lies ; after he had deceived the people, he dared to deceive their rulers. He began with Queen Christina at Hamburg, and ended with King Frederic at Copenhagen.

“ 2d. That a reward of four royal crowns will be paid for the head of Benignus Spiagudry, wizard and sacrilegist, ex-keeper of the Spladgest at Drontheim.

“ 3d. This decree will be published throughout the province by the syndics of all towns and villages, who will take steps to facilitate its execution.”

The syndic took the decree from the crier's hands, and added in a solemn, funereal voice :—

“ The life of these men is offered to whosoever chooses to take it.”

The reader will readily comprehend that the words of the crier were not listened to without more or less emotion by our poor, ill-starred friend, Spiagudry. There can be no question that the indications of unmeasured alarm which escaped him at that moment would have attracted the attention of the nearest group, had it not been entirely engrossed by the first clause of the decree.

“ A price on Hans's head ! ” cried an old fisherman, who had come to the square, dragging his dripping nets behind him. “ By St. Usuph, they might as well set a price on Beelzebub's ! ”

“ To keep the proper proportion between Hans and Beelzebub,” said a hunter, easily recognizable by his chamois-skin jacket, “ they should offer only fifteen hundred crowns for the horned head of the devil himself.”

“ Glory to the holy Mother of God ! ” added an old woman, whose bald head was shaking with the palsy. “ I should like to see the head of this Hans, to make sure that his eyes are two burning coals, as I have heard.”

"Yes, to be sure," said another old hag ; "he set Drontheim cathedral on fire just by looking at it. For my own part I would like to see the monster all complete, with his serpent's tail, his cloven foot, and his great bat's-wings."

"Who told you all those fables, mother?" the hunter asked, conceitedly. "I saw this Hans of Iceland in the ravines of Medsyhath ; he is a man like the rest of us, only he is as tall as a forty-year old poplar."

"Do you mean it?" said a voice in the crowd, with a strange inflection.

This voice, which made Spiagudry start, came from a little man whose face was hidden beneath a miner's broad-brimmed felt, and his body wrapped in a sort of matting made of rushes and seal-skin.

"They might offer a thousand or ten thousand crowns for his head," rejoined a smith, who carried his great hammer slung over his shoulder, "and, faith, it's not myself that would undertake to go and look for him, whether he's four fathoms tall, or forty."

"Nor me," said the fisherman.

"Nor me, nor me," echoed everybody in the crowd.

Any one who may be tempted to do it will find Hans of Iceland to-morrow in the ruins of Arbar, near Smiasen ; day after to-morrow in the cave of Walderhog."

"Are you sure of that, my good man?"

This question was asked simultaneously by Ordener, who was watching the scene with an interest

easily understood by any other than Spiagudry, and by another small man, of full habit, and with a smiling face, who came out at the first note of the crier's horn from the only inn which the village could boast.

The little man with the broad-brimmed hat looked at them both for an instant before he answered in an assumed voice, "Yes."

"How are you able to make this statement so confidently?" Ordener inquired.

"I know where Hans of Iceland is, just as I know where Benignus Spiagudry is; neither of them is far from here at this moment."

All the poor keeper's fright awoke again; he hardly dared to look in the direction of the mysterious little man, and he feared that his French wig was but a poor disguise.

"Master! my lord!" he whispered, pulling Ordener by the cloak, "in Heaven's name, for the love of God, let us get away from this accursed village of hell!"

Ordener, who was as surprised as he, carefully scrutinized the little man, who turned his back to the light and seemed anxious to conceal his features.

"I know this Benignus Spiagudry," cried the fisherman; "I have seen him at the Spladgest at Drontheim. He's a tall fellow. He's the one they offer four crowns for."

The hunter roared with laughter. "Four crowns! I won't hunt the fellow. They pay more for the pelt of a blue fox."

This comparison, which at another time would

have deeply offended the learned keeper, served to comfort him now. Nevertheless he was on the point of appealing once more to Ordener to continue their journey, when the latter, having learned all that he wanted to know, forestalled him by turning away from the assemblage, which was beginning to thin out.

Although it had been their purpose to pass the night at Oëlmœ, they left the village together, by tacit consent, without even questioning one another as to their reasons for so doing. Ordener was governed by the hope of falling in with the brigand the sooner, and Spiagudry by his desire to put the greatest possible distance between himself and the archers.

Ordener was in altogether too serious a frame of mind to laugh at his companion's misfortunes, and when he at last broke the silence his voice was almost affectionate.

"Old man," he said, "what is this ruin where Hans of Iceland can be found to-morrow, according to this little man who seems to know everything?"

"I have no idea. I did n't fully understand him, my noble master," said Spiagudry, with perfect truth.

"In that case," the young man continued, "we must make up our minds to wait until day after to-morrow, and seek him at the cave of Walderhog."

"The cave of Walderhog, my lord, is Hans of Iceland's favorite haunt."

"Let us go in that direction," said Ordener.

"We must turn to the left, then, behind Oëlmœ cliff; it will take us two days to get to Walderhog."

“Do you know this extraordinary man, who seems to know you so well?” Ordener asked, considerately.

The question renewed the terror which was beginning to subside as they increased their distance from the village.

Ordener tried to encourage the old man.

“Fear nothing,” he said. “Serve me faithfully, and I will protect you as faithfully. If I return with Hans’s head, I promise you not only a free pardon, but the thousand crowns which are offered by the authorities.”

Good Benignus was remarkably fond of life, but he was prodigiously fond of gold. Ordener’s promises acted upon him like magic; not only did they put all his fears to flight, but they awoke in him a sort of loquacious hilarity, which found vent in long harangues, strange gestures, and learned quotations.

“Herr Ordener,” he said, “even if I had to engage in a controversy on the subject with Over-Bilseuth, otherwise called the Gossip, nothing should prevent my maintaining that you are a discreet and honorable youth. Indeed, what can be more praiseworthy and more glorious — *quid cithara, tuba, vel campana dignius* — than to endanger one’s life in order to deliver one’s country from a monster, a brigand, a demon, in whom all former demons, brigands, and monsters seem to live again in concentrated form? Let no one dare to suggest that any sordid motive influences you! Noble Herr Ordener resigns the reward of his exploit to his travelling companion, who will have done nothing more than guide him to

within a mile of the cave of Walderhog ; for you will allow me, my young master, will you not, to await the result of your glorious undertaking at the village of Surb, which is in the forest about a mile from Walderhog ? And when your glorious victory is known, my lord, there will be throughout Norway as great rejoicing as when Vermund the Proscribed, from the summit of this same Oëlmœ cliff, whose base we are now skirting, spied the great fire which his brother Hafdan lighted on the donjon of Munckholm in token of its deliverance."

At the name of Munckholm, Ordener hastily interrupted him.

"What ! can we see the donjon of Munckholm from the top of this cliff ?"

"Yes, my lord, twelve miles to the south, between the mountains which our fathers called Frigga's Stools.

"Really !" cried Ordener, grasping eagerly at the hope of seeing once more the spot where he had left his heart. "There must be a path leading to the top, old man ?"

"Yes, there certainly is. It begins in the woods we are just entering, and ascends gradually to the foot of the bare precipice ; from that point there are steps cut in the rock by the companions of Vermund the Proscribed, leading up to the castle on the summit. That is the ruin which you see in the moonlight."

"Very well, old man, you must show me the path. We will pass the night in the ruins from which we can see the donjon of Munckholm."

“Can you think of such a thing, my lord?” said Benignus. “The fatiguing day we have had —”

“I will help you along, old man; my step was never firmer.”

“My lord, the thorns by which the long-disused path is overgrown, the loose stones, the darkness —”

“I will go first.”

“Perhaps some wild beast, some hideous monster —”

“I did n’t undertake this journey with the idea of shunning monsters.”

The idea of making a halt so near to Oëlmœ was very distasteful to Spiagudry; on the other hand, the thought of seeing Munckholm beacon, and perhaps the light in Ethel’s window, was very seductive to Ordener and drew him on.

“Abandon this scheme, my young master,” said Spiagudry; “I have a presentiment that it will bring us ill-luck.”

This prayer was of no effect in the face of Ordener’s longing.

“Come,” he said, testily, “remember that you entered my service. I wish you to show me the path; where is it?”

“We shall be there in a moment,” said the keeper, compelled to comply.

In a moment, as he said, the path opened before them, and they turned into it; but Spiagudry noticed, with mingled surprise and terror, that the long grass was broken and trodden down, and that Vermund’s old path had evidently been recently used.

XX.

Leonardo. The king is asking for you.

Henrique. How can that be?

LOPE DE VEGA: *La Fuerza Lastimosa.*

GENERAL LEVIN VON KNUD sat, apparently lost in meditation, before his desk, upon which divers papers were lying, including some freshly opened letters. A secretary stood beside him, evidently awaiting orders. One moment the general tapped with his spurs the soft carpet beneath his feet, and the next he toyed absent-mindedly with the decoration of the Elephant suspended around his neck by the collar of the Order. From time to time he opened his mouth as if to speak, then checked himself and frowned, and glanced anew at the unsealed despatches which littered the table.

“What the devil!” he exclaimed at last.

That vague remark was followed by another brief interval of silence.

“Who would ever have imagined,” he resumed, “that those infernal miners would go to such lengths? They must have been secretly instigated to revolt by some outsider. But do you know, Wapherney, it’s a very serious matter? Do you know that five or six hundred rascals from the Fa-Roër islands, under the lead of an old villain named Jonas, have already

deserted the mines ; that a young fanatic named Nor-birth has put himself at the head of the malcontents at Guldbranshall ; and that at Sund-Moër, Hubfallo, and Kongsberg the hotheads are only awaiting a signal, and may have risen ere now ? Do you know that the mountaineers are mixed up in it, and that one of the toughest foxes of Kole, old Kennybol, is in command of them ? And last of all, do you know that, according to general report in northern Dron-theimhus, if the syndics who write me on the subject are to be believed, that notorious scamp on whose head we have already set a price, the redoubtable Hans, is commander-in-chief of the insurrection ? What do you say to all this, my dear Wapherney ? ”

“ Your Excellency,” said Wapherney, “ knows what measures — ”

“ There is another circumstance in this wretched affair which I am at a loss to explain ; and that is that our prisoner Schumacker is alleged to be the instigator of the revolt. That charge seems to astonish no one but myself, but it astonishes me more than all else. It is hard for me to believe that a man in whose society Ordener, the soul of loyalty, takes delight, can be a traitor. And yet the miners, I am told, are rising in his name ; his name is their watchword, their rallying cry, and they even give him the titles of which the king deprives him. All this seems certain. But how did it happen that the Countess von Ahlefeld knew all these details six days ago, when the first symptoms of downright insurrection had hardly begun to be manifest in the mines ? That is strange. But no matter, we

must be prepared for everything. Give me my seal, Wapherney."

The general wrote three letters, sealed them, and handed them to the secretary.

"Despatch this to Baron Voethaün, colonel of the arquebusiers now in garrison at Munckholm, so that he may lead his regiment against the insurgents on the instant. This is for the commandant at Munckholm, ordering him to keep closer watch than ever upon the ex-grand-chancellor. I must myself see and question this Schumacker. Send this third letter to Skongen, to Major Wolhm, the commandant there; it directs him to detail a part of the garrison to march to the scene of the insurrection. Go, Wapherney, and see that my orders are promptly executed."

The secretary left the room, leaving the governor deep in thought.

"All this is very disturbing," he said to himself. "Those miners in revolt up yonder, this scheming chancellor here, and that madman Ordener — God knows where! He may be travelling right in the midst of all these bandits, leaving under my protection here this Schumacker, who is conspiring against the State, and his daughter, in whose interest I was obliging enough to send away the company honored by the lieutenancy of Frederic von Ahlefeld, whom Ordener accuses of base designs. But after all, it occurs to me that that company may very well check the first line of the insurgents; it is well placed for that, for Wahlstrom, where it is in garrison, is near the Lake of Smiasen and the ruins of Arbar. It is

one of those points which the rebels must necessarily seize."

At this point in his revery the general was interrupted by the opening of the door.

"Well, Gustavus, what is it?"

"A messenger desires speech of your Excellency."

"What does that mean? More bad news! Let him come in."

The messenger was shown into the room, and handed the general a package.

"From his Serenity the viceroy, your Excellency," he said.

The general hastily tore the despatch open.

"By St. George!" he cried with a surprised gesture. "I verily believe they are all mad! Here the viceroy orders me to report to him at Bergen; pressing business, he says, and by order of the king. That same pressing business selects a convenient time. 'The grand-chancellor, who is at present visiting Drontheimhus, will fill your place during your absence.' He's a substitute whom I am loath to trust. 'The bishop will assist him.' Faith, Frederic makes a judicious selection of governors for a district in a state of revolt! — two men of the robe, a chancellor and a bishop! However, the summons is explicit, and it is by order of the king. I must obey it. But before I go I propose to see Schumacker and question him. I have a feeling that they are trying to involve me in a chaos of intrigue; but I have a compass to guide me which never deceives, — my conscience."

XXI.

The voice of thy slain brother's blood cries out
Ever from the ground, unto the Lord !

LORD BYRON: *Cain, A Mystery.*

“YES, Herr Count, this is the day that we may expect to meet him in the ruins of Arbar. A multitude of circumstances lead me to believe in the accuracy of this valuable bit of information, which I gleaned last evening by mere chance, as I have told you, at the village of Oëlmœ.”

“Are we far from these ruins of Arbar ?”

“The ruin is close by the lake of Smiasen ; the guide assured me that we should be there by mid-day.”

The foregoing sentences were exchanged by two persons on horseback, wrapped in dark cloaks, who were riding together in the early morning along one of the thousand narrow winding roads, which run hither and thither in every direction in the forest which lies between the lakes of Smiasen and Sparbo. A mountain guide, armed with hunting-horn and axe, rode in front of them upon his little gray nag, and behind them were four other horsemen armed to the teeth, toward whom the two first-mentioned turned their heads from time to time, as if they feared to be overheard.

“If this villanous Icelfander really materializes in the ruins of Arbar,” said that one of the two who rode respectfully a little behind the other, “it will be a great point gained, for the most difficult part of our undertaking is to get hold of that intangible being.”

“Do you think so, Musdœmon? Suppose he proposes to reject our offers?”

“Impossible, your Grace! gold galore and the promise of impunity,—what brigand could resist that combination?”

“But you know that this particular brigand is not an ordinary criminal. Don’t judge him by your own measure. If he should refuse how would you fulfil the promise you made to the three leaders of the insurrection night before last?”

“Why, Herr Count, in that case, which I look upon as impossible if we are fortunate enough to find our man, has your Grace forgotten that a spurious Hans of Iceland is to meet me two days hence at the time and place appointed for the rendezvous of the three leaders,—at the Blue Star, which is not very far from the ruins of Arbar?”

“You are right, always right, my dear Musdœmon,” said the noble count; and each of the two resumed his own train of thought.

Musdœmon, whose interest it was to keep his master in good humor, sought to amuse him by questioning the guide.

“My good fellow,” he said, “what is that sort of stone cross up there behind those young oaks?”

The guide, a stupid fellow, with a vacant stare, turned, and shook his head several times, saying:—

“ Oh ! my noble master, that’s the oldest gallows in Norway. Good King Olaiüs had it built for a judge who made a bargain with a brigand.”

Musdœmon read in his patron’s face that the guide’s simple words had produced an impression directly contrary to what he hoped.

“ It was a very curious story,” pursued the guide ; “ old mother Osie told it to me ; the brigand was employed to hang the judge.”

The poor fellow, in his innocence, did not notice that the incident with which he sought to entertain the travellers was apparently almost insulting to them. Musdœmon checked him.

“ Enough, enough,” he said ; “ we know the story.”

“ Insolent wretch ! ” muttered the count. “ He knows the story, does he ? Ah, Musdœmon, you shall pay dear for your impertinence.”

“ Did not his Grace speak ? ” inquired Musdœmon, obsequiously.

“ I was thinking how I could succeed in obtaining the order of Dannebrog for you. The marriage of my daughter Ulrica with Baron Ordener will be a good opportunity.”

Musdœmon overflowed with protestations of gratitude.

“ By the way,” continued his Grace, “ let us talk of our affairs. Do you suppose that the Mecklenburger has received the order of recall which we intended he should have ? ”

The reader will remember that the count was accustomed so to designate General Levin von Knud, who was a native of Mecklenburg.

“‘Let us speak of our affairs!’” Musdœmon repeated to himself, bitterly; “it seems that my affairs are not *our* affairs. Herr Count,” he said, aloud, “I think that the viceroy’s messenger should be at Drontheim before this, so that General Levin must be about taking his leave.”

“That order of recall, my dear fellow,” said the count, affably, “was one of your masterstrokes; it was one of the most artfully conceived and cleverly executed of all your schemes.”

“The honor of it belongs to your Grace quite as much as to me,” rejoined Musdœmon, always careful, as we have seen, to involve the count in all his knavery.

The patron divined his confidant’s secret thought, but chose to appear to know nothing of it. He began to smile.

“My dear private secretary, you are always modest; but nothing can blind my eyes to your eminent services. The presence of Elphega and the absence of the Mecklemburger assure my triumph at Drontheim. I am now the chief man in the province, and if Hans of Iceland accepts the command of the insurgents, which I propose to offer him myself, the glory of putting down this disquieting uprising, and capturing this formidable brigand will all fall upon my shoulders.”

As they were talking together in low tones, the guide turned back.

“Here at our left, my noble masters,” he said, “is the hill where Biord the Just beheaded, in the sight of his army, Vellon with the double tongue, the

traitor who sent away the king's real defenders, and summoned the enemy to the camp, so that he might seem to have saved Biord's life singlehanded."

All these reminiscences of the Norway of the olden time seemed not to Musdœmon's taste, for he roughly interrupted the guide.

"That will do, my man, that will do ; hold your tongue, and go on without turning ; what does it matter to us that these old ruins or dead trees remind you of stupid legends ? You annoy my master with your old-woman's tales."

XXII.

Puck. Now the hungry lion roars,
And the wolf howls the moon :
Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,
All with weary task fordone.
Now the wasted brands do glow,
Whilst the screech-owl, screeching loud,
Puts the wretch that lies in woe
In remembrance of a shroud.
Now it is the time of night,
That the graves all gaping wide,
Every one lets forth his sprite,
In the churchway paths to glide.

SHAKESPEARE : *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

WE retrace our steps. We left Ordener and Spigudry as the moon was rising, toiling painfully up the ridge of the rounded cliff of Oëlmœ. This cliff, which is quite bare from the point where it begins to assume a rounded form, was called by the Norwegian peasants of that day the Vulture's Neck, — a name which not inaptly described the appearance of this enormous mass of granite as viewed from a distance.

As our travellers approached the bare part of the cliff, the forest changed to underbrush, the long grass was succeeded by moss, and the wild eglantine, broom, and holly took the place of the oaks and birches, — the regular deterioration of vegetable life, which upon lofty mountains always indicates the

proximity of the summit, because it signifies the gradually decreasing thickness of the layer of soil with which what we might call the bones of the mountain are covered.

“Herr Ordener,” said Spiagudry, whose unsettled mind was forever wandering in a chaos of inconsequent ideas, “this climb is very fatiguing, and to make up my mind to follow you required all the devotion — But I believe I see a magnificent *convolvulus* over yonder at the right; I wish I might examine it. Why is n’t it daylight? Do you know, it is an extremely impertinent thing to appraise a man of my parts at only four wretched crowns. To be sure, the famous Phædrus was a slave, and Æsop, if we may believe the learned Planudius, was sold in the market like a beast or a thing. And who would not be proud to resemble the great Æsop in any respect?”

“And the notorious Hans, too?” queried Ordener, with a smile.

“By St. Hospitius,” exclaimed the keeper, “do not utter that name so loud; I can do very well without any resemblance to him, my lord, I promise you. But would n’t it be a singular thing if the reward offered for his head should go to Benignus Spiagudry, whose name is coupled with his in the proclamation? Herr Ordener, you are of nobler nature than Jason, for he did not give the golden fleece to the pilot of Argos; and certainly your enterprise, as to the real object of which I am decidedly in the dark, is no less perilous than Jason’s.”

“As you know this Hans of Iceland,” said Or-

dener, "just give me a few details concerning him. You have already told me that he is not a giant, as he is popularly supposed to be."

Spiagudry interrupted him.

"Stay, master! don't you hear footsteps behind us?"

"Yes," replied the young man, coolly. "Don't be alarmed; it's some beast frightened by our approach, moving away through the thickets."

"You are right, my young Cæsar; it's so long since these woods have beheld human beings! To judge by his heavy footfalls it must be a large animal. It's probably an elk or a reindeer; this part of Norway is overrun with them. There are servals hereabouts too. I saw one once which was taken to Copenhagen; it was of monstrous size. I really must give you a description of the ferocious creature."

"My dear guide," said Ordener, "I would much prefer that you give me a description of another creature, no less ferocious, this terrible Hans."

"Speak lower, my lord! How can the young master utter such a name so calmly? You do not know — My God! Herr Ordener, listen!"

Spiagudry, as he ejaculated these words, drew nearer to Ordener, who did in fact hear very distinctly at that moment a noise very similar to the sort of roaring which, as the reader may remember, gave the timid keeper such a fright on the stormy evening when they left Drontheim.

"Did you hear?" he muttered, gasping with terror.

"To be sure I did," said Ordener, "and I cannot

understand why you tremble so. It's the roar of some wild beast, very likely one of those very servals you were talking about just now. Do you expect to pass through such a place as this at such an hour without being notified of the presence of the hosts whose rest you disturb? I promise you, old man, that they are more frightened than you."

Spiagudry plucked up a little courage when he saw how calm his young companion was.

"Upon my word, my lord, it may well be that you are right once more. But that cry, whatever it is, strongly resembles a voice. It was a regrettable inspiration of yours, allow me to tell you, my lord, to climb up to this castle of Vermund's. I fear that some evil will befall us on the Vulture's Neck."

"Fear nothing so long as you are with me," said Ordener.

"Oh! nothing frightens you; but, my lord, none but the blessed St. Paul can fondle vipers without being bitten. You did not notice when we turned into this cursed path that it seemed to have been used within a short time, and that the down-trodden grass had not even had time to raise its head again since some person walked over it."

"I confess that it made little impression upon me, and that my peace of mind does not depend upon the position of a spear of grass. We are just going out of the heather now, and we shall hear no more footsteps or yells of animals; so I will not advise you any more to collect your courage, my gallant guide, but to collect your strength, for yon path, cut in the rock, is like to be more difficult than this."

“It is not so much that it is steeper,” said Spiagudry, “but the learned traveller Suckson states that in many places it is obstructed by huge fragments of rock and heavy stones, which it is impossible to lift, and by no means easy to climb over. There is, among others, a short distance beyond the postern of Malaër which we are approaching, an enormous triangular block of granite, which I have always been most anxious to see. Schoenning asserts that he found the three primitive Runic characters there.”

For some time the travellers had been climbing over the bare rock ; they now reached a small ruined tower, through which they were obliged to pass. Spiagudry called Ordener's attention to it.

“That is the postern of Malaër, my lord ; this path, hewn in the solid rock, passes several other interesting structures, which afford an excellent idea of the old-time fortifications of our Norwegian manor-houses. This postern, which was always guarded by four men-at-arms, was the most advanced outpost of Vermund's fortress. Apropos of the words ‘portal’ and ‘postern,’ an interesting suggestion is made by the monk Urensius: ‘Was not the word *janua*,’ he asks, ‘which is derived from *Janus*, whose temple had such famous portals, the parent of the word *janissary*, applied to those who guard the portal of the Sultan's palace?’ It would be a curious thing if the name of the most mild and peaceful prince whose deeds are recorded in history had come to be applied to the most savage soldiery on earth.”

To the accompaniment of this scientific jargon of

the keeper, they made their way laboriously along, over rolling stones and sharp-edged pebbles, scattered among the short slippery grass which grows in spots on the face of most cliffs. Ordener had forgotten his weariness, thinking of the bliss of seeing distant Munckholm once more, when suddenly Spiagudry exclaimed : —

“ Ah ! I see it ! This sight alone pays me for all my trouble. I see it, my lord, I see it ! ”

“ See what ? ” said Ordener, who was dreaming of his Ethel at the moment.

“ Why, the triangular pyramid of which Schoenning speaks ! With Professor Schoenning and Bishop Isleif, I shall be the third scholar who has had the good luck to examine it. But it’s a great pity that I have no light but the moon.”

As he approached the famous block Spiagudry uttered an exclamation of mingled grief and terror. Ordener, in amazement, questioned him with interest as to his latest cause for emotion ; but it was some time before the archæological worthy could find his voice.

“ You thought,” said Ordener, “ that this stone blocked the path, and you ought to be very glad to find that it does n’t block it in the least degree.”

“ That is just what drives me to despair ! ” said Benignus, woefully.

“ Why so ? ”

“ Why, do you not see, my lord, that the pyramid has been moved from its position, — that the base, which formerly rested in the path, is now uppermost, and that the block now rests upon the face, on which

Schoønning discovered the primordial Runic characters ? I am very unlucky ! ”

“ It certainly is hard luck,” said the young man.

“ And in addition to that,” Spiagudry added earnestly, “ the fact that the stone has been moved proves the presence here of some supernatural being. Unless the devil did it, there is only one man in Norway who could — ”

“ My poor guide, your terror is driving you into a panic again. Who can say that the stone has not been in this position for a century ? ”

“ It is a hundred and fifty years, to be sure,” said Spiagudry, more calmly, “ since it was last studied and described. But it seems to me that it has been moved recently ; the spot where it formerly rested is still damp. Look, my lord.”

Ordener, in his impatience to reach the ruins, dragged his guide away from the marvellous pyramid, and succeeded by dint of soothing words in dissipating the fears which its unaccountable displacement had aroused in the old pedant’s mind.

“ Listen, old man,” he said ; “ you can take up your abode on the shores of this lake, and devote yourself to your engrossing studies, when you have received the thousand royal crowns which the head of Hans will bring you.”

“ You are right, my noble patron ; but do not speak so lightly of a very doubtful victory. I feel that I ought to give you some advice which will make it easier for you to overcome this monster.”

“ Advice ! what is it ? ” said Ordener, drawing nearer to him.

“The brigand carries a skull at his belt, which he uses as a drinking-cup,” said Spiagudry in a low voice, and looking uneasily about. “It is his son’s skull, — the same man whose body I am being hunted for mutilating.”

“Raise your voice a little, and have no fear ! I can hardly hear you. Well ! what about this skull ? ”

“You must do your best to get possession of it,” said Spiagudry, placing his mouth close to the young man’s ear. “The monster has all sorts of superstitious notions in regard to it. When his son’s skull is in your hands you will be able to do whatever you please with him.”

“Very good, my friend ; but how am I to get possession of it ? ”

“By stratagem, my lord ; while the monster sleeps, perhaps — ”

“Enough ! ” Ordener interrupted him. “Your advice is useless to me. I know nothing about sleeping enemies ; I know no weapon but my sword.”

“My lord, my lord ! do we not know that the archangel Michael resorted to a ruse to floor Satan ? ”

Spiagudry suddenly stopped short, and exclaimed feebly, pointing with both hands : —

“O heaven ! O heaven ! what do I see up there ? Look, master ! do you see that little short man, walking in front of us in this same path ? ”

“Faith, no,” said Ordener, raising his eyes, “I see nothing at all.”

“Nothing, master ? But the path winds, and he went out of sight behind yon rock. Let us go no farther, my lord, I implore you.

“Why, if this imaginary personage disappeared so quickly, it means that he does n’t intend to wait for us; and if he is running away it’s no reason why we should do the same.”

‘Protect us, St. Hospitius!’ said Spiagudry, who always remembered his patron saint in times of danger.

“You mistook the moving shadow of a frightened owl for a man,” added Ordener.

“I really thought that I saw a man, but I know that the moonlight often produces strange illusions. It was by moonlight that Baldan, Lord of Merneugh, mistook his white bed-curtain for his mother’s ghost; he was so terrified that he went the next day to the judges at Christiania to confess that he murdered her, just as her innocent page was about to be condemned. One might say that the moonlight saved the page’s life.”

No one could forget the present in the past more readily than Spiagudry. One effort of his vast memory was enough to banish all the emotions of the moment. Thus the story of Baldan put his fear to flight.

“It is possible that the moonlight misled me,” he said.

Meanwhile they were approaching the summit of the Vulture’s Neck, and began to catch glimpses of the top of the ruins, which were hidden from them as they ascended, by the rounded outline of the cliff.

The reader must not be astonished if we frequently discover ruins on the mountain-tops of Norway. Whoever has travelled through the mountainous

regions of Europe cannot have failed to notice the remains of fortresses and castles, clinging to the very crests of the loftiest peaks, like the old-time vulture's-nests, or the eyries of dead and gone eagles. In Norway especially, at the period of which we are writing, aerial edifices of this description were to be met with in astounding number and variety. Sometimes there were dismantled walls of great extent, circling around the rocky peak like a girdle; again there were slender, pointed towers, like a crown, on the very summit; or upon the snow-covered brow of a lofty mountain, great round towers grouped around a huge keep, and presenting from a distance the aspect of an old-fashioned tiara. Close beside the slender ogive arches of a Gothic cloister might be seen the massive Egyptian pillars of a Saxon church; beside the square-towered stronghold of a pagan chieftain, the embattled fortress of a Christian lord; beside a castle whose walls were crumbling with age, a monastery destroyed by war. All these structures, a medley of strange styles of architecture, which are almost unknown to-day, solidly constructed upon sites which seemed inaccessible, were nothing but masses of ruins, which remained to bear witness at once to the might and the impotence of man. It may be that many things took place within these walls more worthy of being told than all else that has ever been told on earth; but events succeed each other, the eyes which saw them close forever; traditions die away by lapse of years, like a fire which has not been replenished; and who can penetrate the mystery of the ages?

The former abode of Vermund the Proscribed, at which our two travellers had at last arrived, was one of those to which tradition ascribed an extraordinary number of miraculous and awe-inspiring occurrences. By the walls, which were constructed of large pebbles imbedded in a cement which had become harder than the stones themselves, it was easy to see that it must have been built in the fifth or sixth century. Of its five towers, but one was still standing at its full height; the other four were more or less dilapidated, and their ruins were strewn all over the summit of the cliff; they were connected by lines of ruins which marked the former limits of the courtyard of the castle. It was very difficult to penetrate into this courtyard, obstructed as it was with loose stones, great blocks of granite, and shrubs of every variety, which ran from ruined wall to ruined wall, covering the whole with an almost impenetrable tangle, or extended their long waving arms over the edge of the cliff. The tradition ran that the pale ghosts of those who had drowned themselves in the Sparbo were wont to swing at the end of these waving branches on moonlit nights, and that the familiar spirit of the lake made use of them to hold the cloud which was to bear him away at dawn. Terrifying mysteries were these, which had been witnessed more than once by daring fishermen when they ventured at night, while the dog-fish were sleeping,¹ to sail up to Oëlmœ cliff, whose rounded brow towered above them in the darkness like the broken arch of a gigantic bridge.

¹ The dog-fish are very obnoxious to fishermen because they frighten other fish away.

Our two adventurers succeeded, not without much difficulty, in climbing through a breach in the wall of the building, the former doorway being heaped up with ruins. The only tower which was still standing was at the edge of the cliff. Its summit was the point from which the Munckholm beacon could be seen, Spiagudry explained to Ordener. They walked toward it, although it was intensely dark at the moment, the moon being entirely hidden by a huge black cloud. They were on the point of climbing through a gap in another wall, to pass into what had been the second courtyard of the castle, when Benignus stopped short, and grasped Ordener's arm with a hand that trembled so that the young man's body shook.

"What is it, in Heaven's name?" he asked in great surprise.

Benignus, without replying, grasped his arm more firmly than ever, as if to enjoin silence upon him.

"Why—" the young man began.

Renewed pressure on his arm, accompanied by an ill-suppressed sigh, made him decide to wait patiently until this latest spasm of terror should be past.

At last Spiagudry began in a stifled voice:—

"Well, master, what do you say to that?"

"To what?" said Ordener.

"Yes, my lord," continued the other, in the same tone, "surely you repent now that you came up here!"

"No, indeed I do not, my brave guide, and I hope to go up much farther. Why should I repent?"

"What, my lord, did you not see?"

"See what?"

"You did not see?" repeated the honest keeper, with constantly increasing fright.

"I saw nothing," retorted Ordener, testily; "I saw nothing, I tell you, and I heard nothing but your teeth chattering with fear."

"What! didn't you see those two eyes blazing like comets, which glared out at us from behind that wall there, in the shadow?"

"On my honor, no."

"You did not see them go from side to side, then up, then down, and finally disappear among the ruins?"

"I don't know what you mean; and after all, what does it matter?"

"Do you know, Herr Ordener, that there is but one man in Norway whose eyes shine like that in the darkness?"

"What does it matter, I say? Who is this man with the eyes of a cat, pray? Is it Hans, your terrible Icelfander? So much the better; if he is here it will save us the journey to Walderhog."

This "so much the better" was not at all to Spiagudry's taste, and he could not abstain from revealing his secret thought by exclaiming involuntarily: —

"Ah! my lord, you promised to leave me at the village of Surb, a good mile from the place of combat."

Ordener, the good-natured and noble-hearted, smiled.

"You are right, old man; it would be unfair to



involve you in the risks I run. So you need fear nothing. You see this Hans of Iceland everywhere. May there not be a wild cat here among these ruins whose eyes are as bright as that man's?"

For the fifth time Spiagudry succeeded in plucking up his courage, whether because Ordener's explanation seemed a natural one, or because his young companion's tranquillity had something contagious in it.

"Ah! my lord," he said, "except for you I should have died of fright ten times over while climbing this cliff. To be sure, except for you I never should have undertaken it."

The moon came out from behind the cloud, and revealed the entrance to the high tower, at the foot of which they were now standing. They entered, pushing aside a thick curtain of ivy, which rained down sleeping lizards and old bird's-nests upon them. The keeper picked up two stones and struck them together, letting the sparks fall upon a pile of dead leaves and dry branches collected by Ordener. In a few seconds a brisk fire was blazing merrily away, and by its light they were able to scrutinize the interior of the tower.

Nothing of it remained save the circular outside wall, which was very thick and covered with moss and ivy. The ceilings of the four stories had fallen one after another down to the ground-floor, where they made an enormous heap of débris. A narrow spiral staircase, with no railing, and broken in several places, followed the inner surface of the wall to the top.

At the first crackling of the fire a cloud of owls and ospreys flew clumsily away, with doleful cries of alarm and wonder, and huge bats at intervals fanned the flame with their ash-colored wings.

"These hosts of ours don't extend us a very cordial welcome," said Ordener; "but don't you lose your head again."

"I, my lord!" rejoined Benignus, sitting down by the fire; "I fear an owl or a bat! I have lived with corpses, and I am not afraid of vampires. Ah! it's only the living that I fear! I am not very courageous, I agree, but I am not superstitious. If you are of my mind, my lord, we will snap our fingers at these ladies with the unmusical voices, and think about supper.

Ordener thought of nothing but Munckholm.

"I have some provisions here," continued Spigudry, pulling his wallet out from beneath his cloak; "but if your appetite is equal to mine this black bread and rancid cheese will soon disappear. I see that we shall be obliged to remain a long distance outside the limits of the law of the French king, Philip the Fair: '*Nemo audeat comedere præter duo ferula cum potagio.*' There ought to be seamews' or pheasants' nests at the top of the tower; but how can we get there with a rickety staircase, which will bear nobody heavier than a sylph?"

"It must needs bear me, however," said Ordener, "for I shall certainly climb to the top of this tower."

"What, master! to get seamew's-nests? In God's name, don't be so imprudent! You must not kill

yourself for the sake of supping a little more heartily. Remember, too, that you may make a mistake and take owls' nests."

"What care I for your nests, think you? Did you not tell me that the donjon of Munckholm can be seen from the top?"

"That is true, my young master, — to the southward. I see now that your desire to establish that point, which is of so much importance to geographical science, dictated this wearisome journey to Vermund's castle. But reflect, I beg you, noble Herr Ordener, that the duty of a zealous student may sometimes call upon him to undergo fatigue, but never danger. Do not, I implore you, trust yourself on that villanous ruined staircase, where not even a crow would dare to perch."

Benignus was very far from anxious to be left alone at the foot of the tower. As he rose to take Ordener's hand, his wallet, which was resting on his knees, fell to the ground, and gave forth a ringing, metallic sound.

"What is there in your wallet to make such a sound as that?" Ordener asked him.

This question, on a subject of such delicacy, banished Spiagudry's desire to detain his companion.

"Very well," he said, without answering the question, "since you persist in your determination, notwithstanding my entreaties, look out for the breaks in the staircase."

"But what is there in your wallet to make it ring like metal?" Ordener repeated.

His inconsiderate curiosity was extremely annoy-

ing to the old keeper, who cursed his questioner with his whole heart.

“Pshaw! my noble master,” he replied; “what can you care about a paltry iron shaving-dish which rings when it strikes the stone? Since I cannot shake your determination,” he hastened to add, “be sure and come down again at once, and be careful to hold on by the ivy which covers the wall. You will see Munckholm beacon between Frigga’s Stools, to the south.”

Spiagudry could have said nothing better calculated to drive every other thought from the young man’s mind; he threw aside his cloak, and darted to the staircase. The keeper followed him with his eyes, as he clambered up, until his figure became nothing more than a vague shadow against the wall, the top of which was but faintly lighted by the flickering flame of the fire and the still reflection of the moon.

Thereupon Spiagudry seated himself and picked up his wallet.

“My dear Benignus Spiagudry,” he said, “while you are alone, and that young lynx has n’t his eyes on you, make haste to break the inopportune iron shell which prevents you from taking possession, *oculis et manu*, of the treasure which that casket doubtless contains. When it is released from its prison, it will be lighter to carry, and easier to hide.”

He seized a large stone and was on the point of breaking open the cover of the casket, when a ray of light happened to strike upon the seal with which it was fastened, and checked him in the very act.

"By Saint Willebrod the Numismatist, I cannot be mistaken," he cried, vigorously rubbing the rusty cover; "those are certainly the arms of Griffenfeld. I came very near making a fool of myself by breaking this seal. This is very likely the only example in existence of this famous crest, which was broken in 1676 by the hand of the executioner. The devil! we must not touch the cover. Whatever may be the value of the objects it hides, unless they happen to be coins from Palmyra, or Carthaginian medals, this seal is certainly far more valuable than they. Here am I, the sole proprietor of the defunct arms of Griffenfeld! I must hide this treasure away very carefully. I may perhaps discover some secret way to open the casket without being guilty of vandalism. The arms of Griffenfeld! And yes! there is the hand of justice, and the scales on a field gules! What luck!"

At each new discovery that he made as he rubbed the rust off the old casket, he uttered an exclamation of wonder or satisfaction.

"By using a dissolvent, I will open the lock without breaking the seal. Doubtless the box contains the ex-chancellor's treasures. If some rascal, tempted by the bait of four crowns offered by the syndic, should recognize me and apprehend me, it will be an easy matter to ransom myself. In that case this blessed casket will be my salvation."

As he spoke, he instinctively raised his eyes. In a twinkling the expression of his grotesque features changed from frantic delight to stupid terror. All his limbs trembled convulsively. His eyes became

fixed and staring, his brows contracted, his mouth remained wide open, and his voice died away in his throat.

Opposite him, on the other side of the fire, stood a little man with folded arms. By his blood-stained deer-skin garments, his stone axe, his red beard, and the piercing gaze fixed upon him, the wretched keeper recognized at a glance the terrible personage whose last visit he received at the Spladgest at Drontheim.

“It is I!” said the little man, with a terrifying expression. “So the casket will be your salvation!” he added with an ironical smile of frightful significance. “Spiagudry! is this the road to Thocktree?”

The poor wretch struggled to speak.

“Thocktree! My lord — my noble master — I was on my way there —”

“You were on your way to Walderhog,” thundered the other.

Spiagudry, beside himself with terror, put all his strength into a shake of his head.

“You were guiding an enemy to my haunts. I thank you! it will be one less man on earth. Have no fear, faithful guide; he will follow you.”

The wretched keeper tried to cry out, but could produce nothing more than a vague, confused muttering.

“Why are you terrified at my presence? You were looking for me. Listen! Do not cry out, or you are a dead man.”

The little man waved his stone axe over the keeper's head, and continued, in a voice which issued

from his throat with a noise like that made by a torrent pouring out of a cavern : —

“ You have betrayed me ! ”

“ No, your Grace ; no, your Excellency,” stammered Benignus at last, and with the utmost difficulty.

The other roared with anger.

“ Ah ! you would deceive me still ! Don't think it. Listen ! I was on the roof of the Spladgest, when you made your bargain with this madman ; it was my voice which you heard thrice over. It was my voice also which you heard on the road ; it was I whom you met in the tower of Vygla ; it was I who said, ‘ Till we meet again. ’ ”

The panic-stricken keeper looked wildly around, as if seeking assistance. The little man continued : —

“ I did not choose to let those troops who were on your track escape, for they belonged to the Munckholm regiment. I was sure of not losing you. Spia-gudry, it was I whom you saw again in Oëlmœ village beneath the miner's felt hat ; it was my step and my voice that you heard, and my eyes that you saw when you were climbing up to these ruins, — and here I am ! ”

Alas ! the poor wretch was only too well convinced of it ; he rolled on the ground at the feet of his pitiless judge, crying in a heart-rending, broken voice :

“ Mercy ! mercy ! ”

The little man, still with his arms folded, fixed a bloodthirsty gaze upon him, more intense than the flame of the fire.

“ Ask mercy of the casket to which you look for your salvation,” he said satirically.

"Mercy, my lord! Mercy!" Spiagudry repeated in a dying voice.

"I bade you be faithful and dumb; you had n't it in you to be faithful, but I vow that hereafter you shall be dumb."

The keeper, as he grasped the awful meaning of these words, groaned aloud.

"Have no fear," said the man; "I will not separate you from your treasure."

As he spoke he removed his leather belt, passed it through the ring of the casket, and hung it about Spiagudry's neck, who bent beneath its weight.

"Well!" continued his companion, "to what devil do you wish to commit your soul? Make haste to summon him so that some other demon, of whom you do not approve, may not get possession of you before him."

The old man, utterly unable to articulate a word in his despair, fell at the dwarf's knees, waving his hands frantically in entreaty, and expressing his abject terror by a thousand signs and gestures.

"No, no!" said the little man; "listen, my faithful Spiagudry: grieve not at the thought of leaving your young companion without a guide; I promise you that he shall follow where you lead. Follow me,—you will simply be showing him the way. Come, we must be off!"

With that he seized the luckless wretch in his arms of iron, and carried him forth from the tower, as a tiger carries a long, writhing snake; a moment later the ruins rang with a frightful shriek, followed by a no less frightful roar of laughter.

XXIII.

Yes,

The limner's art may trace the absent feature,
And give the eye of distant weeping faith
To view the form of its idolatry ;
But, oh ! the scenes 'mid which they met and parted —
The thoughts, the recollections sweet and bitter,
The Elysian dreams of lovers when they loved —
Who shall restore them ?

MATURIN : *Bertram.*

MEANWHILE the adventurous Ordener, after twenty narrow escapes from serious falls, at last reached the top of the massive circular wall of the tower. At his unexpected arrival great numbers of venerable black owls, rudely disturbed in their haunts, flew obliquely away, gazing stupidly at him, and loose stones, dislodged by his feet, dropped into the dark depths of the tower, bounding from point to point, with sounds which grew fainter and fainter as they fell.

At any other time Ordener would have allowed his gaze and his thoughts to wander long over the vast landscape, to which the darkness lent even vaster proportions. His eye would have been attracted by the huge shadows on the horizon, whose dark outlines were just tinged with white by the watery moon, and would have sought to distinguish the mists from

the cliffs, and the mountains from the clouds ; his imagination would have endowed with life all the gigantic shapes and fantastic apparitions which the moon imparts to mountain-tops and masses of vapor. He would have listened to the distant vague murmuring of the lake and the forests, mingled with the sharp rustling of the dry leaves blown about by the wind in the clefts between the rocks at his feet ; and his mind would have translated the sounds uttered by all the dead voices in which nature speaks while mankind is sleeping during the silent watches of the night.

But, although the scene did make a deep impression upon him, he did not realize it at the moment, for his mind was filled with thoughts of something very different. No sooner did his foot rest on the top of the wall than his eyes turned to the southern sky, and his heart was filled with indescribable joy when he saw through the opening between the two mountains a light twinkling on the horizon like a ruddy star. It was the Munckholm beacon.

They who fail to understand the young man's feelings at that moment are not destined ever to know life's truest happiness. His whole heart swelled with ecstasy, and its pulsations were so quick and strong that he could scarcely breathe. Motionless he stood, gazing with straining eyes at the star of comfort and hope. It seemed to him that this ray of light, borne to him on the wings of the night from the four walls which enclosed all his earthly happiness, brought with it something of his Ethel. Ah ! let us not doubt that souls sometimes have mysterious means

of correspondence, which defy time and space. In vain does the material world erect its barriers between two beings who love one another; living as they do in the clouds, they appear to each other when they are apart, and they are still one in death. What, indeed, is bodily separation or physical distance to two hearts which are indissolubly bound together by community of thought and desire? True love may suffer; it cannot die.

Who has not stopped a hundred times of rainy nights beneath a dimly lighted window? Who has not walked back and forth before a certain door, or taken keen delight in wandering around a certain house? Who has not suddenly turned upon his heel of an evening to follow through the windings of a deserted street a fluttering dress or a white veil which the darkness does not prevent his recognizing? The man who has had no such experiences as these can say that he has never loved.

As he gazed at the far-off Munckholm beacon, Ordener reflected. His first feeling of unalloyed pleasure was succeeded by a sort of mournful satisfaction, not without a touch of irony. A thousand opposing emotions jostled such other in his throbbing heart.

“Yes,” he said to himself, “man must needs climb long and laboriously in order to spy a bright star of happiness in the boundless night. She is there! she is sleeping, she is dreaming, — dreaming perhaps of me! But who will tell her that her Ordener is at this moment standing, sorrowful and alone, on the brink of an abyss? — her Ordener, who has naught of her

to comfort him save a lock of hair against his heart, and an uncertain light on the horizon ! ”

He cast a glance down upon the ruddy blaze of the great fire at the foot of the tower, which shone out through the gaps in the wall.

“ It may be,” he muttered, “ that she is at this moment glancing heedlessly from the window of her prison at the distant gleam of that fire.”

Suddenly a loud shriek and a prolonged burst of laughter reached his ears, coming apparently from the depths of the abyss below him ; he turned quickly, and saw that the interior of the tower was deserted. Anxious for the old man’s safety, he started to go down in hot haste ; but he was only a short distance from the summit when he heard a dull splash like that which would be made by a heavy body falling into the deep waters of the lake.

XXIV.

The Count Don Sancho Diaz, Lord of Saldana, wept bitter tears in his dungeon.

In his black despair he inveighed against King Alphonso :

“O wretched moments, when my gray hairs remind me how many years I have already passed in this horrible prison !”

Spanish Romances.

THE sun was setting ; its horizontal rays cast the black shadow of the bars at their window upon Schumacker's woollen gown, and Ethel's simple dress of crêpe. They were sitting by the high ogive window, the old man in a large Gothic arm-chair, the maiden on a stool at his feet. The prisoner seemed abstracted and sad. His wrinkled brow was resting in his hands, and nought could be seen of his face save the white beard, which hung uncombed upon his breast.

“Father,” said Ethel, who was seeking some way to divert his thoughts, “my lord and father. I dreamed last night of a happy time to come. Look, father, raise your eyes and look at the lovely sky.”

“I can see the sky only through my prison bars,” replied the old man, “as I can see your future only through my misfortunes, Ethel.”

His head, which he had raised for an instant, fell back upon his hands, and both were silent.

“My lord and father,” the maiden began timidly a moment later, “are you thinking of Herr Ordener ?”

“Ordener,” repeated the old man, as if trying to

remember — “ Ah ! yes, I know whom you mean. What of him ? ”

“ Do you think that he will soon return, father ? It’s a long time already since he went away. This is the fourth day.”

The old man sadly shook his head.

“ I fear that when the fourth year after his departure shall have passed, we shall be as near his return as we are to-day.”

Ethel turned pale.

“ My God ! Do you mean that you think he won’t return at all ? ”

Schumacker made no reply. The young girl repeated her question in a tone of anxious entreaty.

“ Did he not promise that he would return ? ” said the prisoner, abruptly.

“ Yes, certainly he did, father,” Ethel replied eagerly.

“ Then how can you count upon his return ? is he not a man ? I believe that the vulture may return to the carrion, but I do not believe in the return of spring to the dying year.”

Ethel took comfort in the fact that this gloomy prophecy was uttered in one of her father’s melancholy moods ; there was a voice in her innocent maiden’s heart which gave the lie direct to the old man’s cynical philosophy.

“ Father,” she said with conviction, “ Herr Orderer will return : he is not a man like other men.”

“ What do you know of him, girl ? ”

“ No more than you know yourself, my lord and father.”

"I know nothing. I heard words from a man's mouth promising to do godlike deeds. I have reflected thereon," he added, with a bitter laugh, "and I see that it was too fine to believe."

"And I, father, do believe in it, for the very reason that it is fine."

"Ah! my girl, if you were what you ought to be, Countess of Tonsberg and Princess of Wollin, surrounded as you would then be by a court of handsome traitors and selfish, interested adorers, such credulity would be a source of great danger to you."

"It is not credulity, my lord and father, but faith."

"It is easy to see, Ethel, that there is French blood in your veins."

This thought carried the old man back by a natural transition to memories of the past, and he continued with a sort of self-complacency:—

"They who have degraded your father more than he had been exalted, cannot make it any the less true that you are the daughter of Carlotta, Princess of Tarento, and that one of your ancestors was Adèle or Édèles, Countess of Flanders, whose name you bear."

Ethel's thoughts were running in a different channel.

"Father," she said, "you do not rightly judge the noble Ordener."

"Noble, my child! in what sense do you use that word? I have made nobles who were very vile."

"I do not mean that he belongs to those nobles who assert their own nobility."

“Do you mean, then, that he is descended from a *jarl* or a *hersa*?”¹

“I know no more than you do, father. He may be,” said Ethel, casting down her eyes, “the son of a serf or vassal. Alas! crowns and lyres are painted on the carpets which cover carriage-steps. I mean simply, my beloved father, that he has a noble heart.”

Of all the men whom she had ever seen, Ethel knew Ordener most intimately and least intimately at the same time. He had appeared in her life like the angels who visited the first men, enveloped in light and yet surrounded with mystery. Their mere presence revealed their nature, and they were worshipped. So Ordener revealed to Ethel what men are most prone to conceal, his heart, and said nothing concerning that of which they are generally most inclined to boast, his country and his family. His look was enough for Ethel, and she had faith in his words. She loved him and had given him her life; she knew every thought of his heart, but she did not know his name.

“A noble heart!” the old man repeated, “a noble heart! Such nobility is far above that which kings can bestow; for it is God who bestows it. He is less lavish than they.”

At this point the prisoner looked up at his shattered coat of arms.

“And he never takes it away again,” he added.

¹ The old nobles in Norway, before Griffenfeld founded a regular order of nobility, bore the titles of *hersa* (baron) or *jarl* (count). From this latter word is derived the English word *earl*.

“For that reason, father, dear, he who retains the one should be easily consoled for the loss of the other.”

These brave words inspired the old man, and restored his courage.

“You are right, girl,” he rejoined in a firm voice. “But you do not know that the disgrace which the world dreams unmerited is sometimes justified by our inmost conscience. Such is our wretched nature! when once misfortune lays its hand upon us, a multitude of voices, which held their peace while our affairs prospered, lift themselves up within us, to reproach us for our faults and mistakes.”

“Do not say so, my noble father,” said Ethel, deeply moved; for she felt sure, from the old man’s altered voice, that he had allowed the secret cause of part of his sorrow to escape him.

She looked up in his face, and kissed his cold and wrinkled hand.

“You judge two noble men very harshly,” she continued, gently, — “Herr Ordener and yourself, dearest father.”

“You form opinions too hastily, Ethel. One would say that you do not realize the seriousness of life.”

“Is it wrong in me, father, to wish to do justice to noble-hearted Ordener?”

Schumacker frowned with annoyance.

“I cannot approve your bestowing your admiration in this way, my daughter, upon a stranger, whom you will probably never see again.”

“Oh! do not think that,” said the maiden, upon whose heart these cold words fell like a heavy

weight. "We shall see him again. Did he not undertake this dangerous expedition for your sake?"

"I confess that at first I allowed myself to be beguiled by his promises, as you did. But no, he will not go, and so he will not come back to us."

"He will go, father, he will go!"

The tone in which she uttered these words was almost offensive. She felt insulted herself in the person of her Ordener. Alas! she was too sure in her heart of what she asserted so confidently.

"Oh! well," rejoined the prisoner, apparently unmoved; "if he does go to fight this brigand, it will make no difference, he will not return."

Poor Ethel! How often does a word spoken thoughtlessly cause grievous pain to the hidden wound of an anxious, breaking heart! She turned her pallid cheeks away, to hide from her father's cold glance two tears, which escaped from her swollen eyes, despite her efforts to restrain them.

"Oh! my father!" she whispered; "perhaps that hapless youth may be laying down his life for you as those words pass your lips!"

The ex-chancellor shook his head sceptically.

"I believe it no more than I desire it; but if it be so, where would be my crime? I should have been unjust and ungrateful to this youth, as so many others have been to me."

A deep sigh was Ethel's only answer; and Schumacker, turning to his desk, began to fold and tear, absent-mindedly, the leaves of a volume of Plutarch's "Lives" which lay before him, already torn in twenty places and crowded with notes.

A moment later the door was thrown open, and Schumacker, without turning around, cried as usual :

“ Let no one come in ! Leave me, I do not wish to see any one.”

“ It is his Excellency the Governor,” the usher’s voice replied.

And as he spoke, an elderly man, clad in the full-dress uniform of a general, and wearing around his neck the collars of the Elephant, Dannebrog, and the Golden Fleece, walked up to Schumacker, who half rose from his chair, repeating between his teeth :
“ The governor ! the governor ! ”

The general bowed respectfully to Ethel, who stood by her father, and returned his glance with an anxious and disturbed expression.

Perhaps, before going farther, it will be well to recall in a few words the motive of General Levin’s visit to Munckholm. The reader will not have forgotten the unpleasant news which caused the old governor so much annoyance as narrated in the twentieth chapter of this veracious history. His first thought at that time was that he ought to question Schumacker, but it was with the greatest difficulty that he made up his mind to do it. The idea of persecuting an unfortunate prisoner who had already undergone so much persecution, and whom he had known when he was the most powerful man in the realm, — the idea of prying into the secrets of misfortune, even though it were tainted with guilt, was extremely distasteful to his kind and generous nature. However, the king’s service demanded it ; he could not afford to leave Drontheim without such

further light as might be afforded by questioning the apparent instigator of the miners' revolt.

On the evening preceding his departure, after a long, confidential interview with the Countess von Ahlefeld, the governor at last decided to submit to the ordeal. On his way to the castle, the thought of what the interests of the State required, and how his numerous personal enemies would turn to account what they might call his negligence, — perhaps, too, the crafty words of the grand chancellor's wife, — fermented in his brain and strengthened his resolution. He entered the donjon of the Lion of Schleswig, determined to deal as sternly with the conspirator Schumacker as if he had never known Chancellor Griffenfeld, to lay aside all his memories of the past, even to the point of changing his own disposition, and to address his old-time associate in favor and power in the rôle of an inflexible judge.

But he had no sooner crossed the threshold of the ex-chancellor's apartment than he was deeply impressed by the old man's venerable, although somewhat morose countenance, at the same time that his heart was touched by the expression upon Ethel's sweet, proud features; his first glimpse of the two prisoners put half of his sternness to flight.

He walked up to the disgraced minister, and involuntarily extended his hand, saying as he did so, without noticing the other's failure to respond: —

“Good evening, Count von Griffen —” He used the old familiar title from force of habit, but hastily corrected himself: “Herr Schumacker!”

With that he stopped, as if exhausted by the effort.

There was a pause. The general was cudgelling his brain for words sufficiently harsh to correspond with this harsh beginning.

"I understand," said Schumacker at last, "that you are the Governor of Drontheimhus?"

The general, somewhat taken aback to find himself questioned by the person whom he had come to question, nodded his head affirmatively.

"In that case," the prisoner continued, "I have a complaint to make to you."

"A complaint! What is it? what is it?" and Levin's noble face assumed an expression of deep interest.

Schumacker continued ill-humoredly:—

"The viceroy's order directed that I should be left free and unmolested in this donjon."

"I knew of the order."

"Well, Herr Governor, people are permitted none the less to enter my prison and annoy me."

"Who, pray?" cried the general; "name the man who dares—"

"Yourself, Herr Governor."

These words, and the supercilious tone in which they were uttered, wounded the general. He replied with something very like irritation:—

"You forget that my power knows no limits, when the king's service is concerned."

"Except those imposed by the respect due to misfortune," retorted Schumacker. "But men know nothing of that."

The ex-chancellor made this last remark as if he were speaking to himself. The governor overheard him.

"To be sure, to be sure ! I was wrong, Count von Griff — Herr Schumacker, I mean ; I ought to overlook your anger, since I have the power."

Schumacker was silent for a moment.

"There is something in your face and your voice, Herr Governor," he rejoined, pensively, "which reminds me of a man whom I knew in the old days. I am the only one who remembers those days ; they were the days of my prosperity. The man I refer to was one Levin von Knud, from Mecklemburg. Did you know the madman ? "

"I knew him," the general replied, without betraying any emotion.

"Ah ! you remember him. I thought that nobody remembered except the unfortunate."

"Was he not a captain in the royal militia ? " continued the governor.

"Yes, only a captain, although the king was very fond of him. But he thought only of pleasure, and displayed no ambition. He had some curiously extravagant ideas. Can you conceive of such shrinking modesty on the part of a favorite ? "

"Oh, yes."

"I was very fond of this Levin von Knud, because he never worried me. He was on the same terms of friendship with the king as with his other friends. It was as if he loved him for his own pleasure, with no thought of his fortunes."

The general tried to interrupt the old man, but he

went doggedly on, either impelled by a spirit of contradiction, or because he really took pleasure in the memories which were stirred within him.

"Since you knew this Captain Levin, Herr Governor, you know doubtless that he had a son who died in infancy. Do you remember what took place at that son's birth?"

"I remember much more distinctly what took place at his death," said the general, in a trembling voice, putting his hand before his eyes.

"It is something which very few people know," continued Schumacker, heedlessly, "but it will serve excellently well to show what a curious fellow this Levin was. The king offered to be the child's godfather; will you believe that Levin declined? He did even worse than that; he selected for godfather an old beggar who was lying outside the palace door. I never could understand the motive for such a crazy whim."

"I will tell you," replied the general. "In selecting a sponsor for his son's soul, Captain Levin doubtless thought that a poor man has more influence with God than a crowned head."

Schumacker reflected a moment.

"You are right," he said.

The governor then made another attempt to lead the conversation back to the object of his visit, but Schumacker stopped him.

"In God's name, if it is true that Levin the Mecklenburger is an acquaintance of yours, let me talk of him. Of all the men whom I knew in my days of power, he is the only one whose memory causes me

neither disgust nor horror. If he did carry his eccentricity to the point of folly, his many noble qualities none the less made him such a man as few are in this world."

"I don't agree with you. This Levin was much the same as other men. There are many much better than he."

Schumacker folded his arms and gazed at the ceiling.

"Yes, that is just like all of them! One cannot praise in their presence a man who deserves praise, without their trying at once to defame him. They poison everything, even the pleasure of awarding just praise. However, it is rarely possible to do that."

"If you knew me you would never accuse me of a purpose to defame Gen — I mean, Captain Levin."

"Go to, go to," said the prisoner; "there never were two men like Levin von Knud for loyalty and generosity; and to say the contrary is to slander him and to bestow unmerited praise upon this execrable human race!"

"I assure you," rejoined the governor, seeking to appease Schumacker's wrath, "that I have no desire to asperse Levin von Knud."

"Do not say so. Mad as he was, no other man resembles him. They are all false, ungrateful, envious, and slanderers. Do you know that Levin von Knud gave more than half of his income to the hospitals of Copenhagen?"

"I did not know that you knew it."

"That's it!" exclaimed the old man triumphantly; "he thought that he might safely throw stones at

poor Levin, trusting to my ignorance of his good deeds."

"No, no!"

"Do you fancy that I don't also know that he requested that the regiment which the king proposed to give him should be given to an officer who had wounded him, Levin von Knud, in a duel, because, he said, the other was of an older family than he?"

"I thought that that transaction was secret."

"Pray tell me, Herr Governor of Drontheim, if it was any the less estimable for that? Because Levin did not advertise his virtues, is that any reason for denying him their possession. Oh! how men resemble each other! And to dare to compare them with noble-hearted Levin, who, when he failed to save the life of a soldier who was convicted of trying to assassinate him, gave an annuity to the man's widow!"

"Well! who would not have done as much?"

Schumacker could contain himself no longer.

"Who?" he shouted. "You! I! all mankind, Herr Governor! Because you wear the brilliant uniform of a general, and medals of honor on your breast, do you believe in your own merit? You are a general, and poor Levin probably died a captain. To be sure he was a fool, and did n't devote all his energy to his own promotion."

"If he did not provide for himself, the king's kindness provided for him."

"Kindness? say rather justice! — if there is such a thing as justice known to kings. Well! what signal recompense has been awarded him?"

“His Majesty has rewarded Levin von Knud far beyond his deserts.”

“Magnificent!” cried the old minister, clapping his hands. “A loyal captain after thirty years’ service has been made a major, I suppose, and that notable mark of favor displeases you, noble general. The old Persian proverb is right in saying that the setting sun is jealous of the rising moon.”

Schumacker was so excited and angry that the general could hardly interject these words: —

“If you persist in interrupting me, you make it impossible for me to explain —”

“No, no!” the other continued, “I thought, at first blush, Herr General, that I could distinguish some points of resemblance between you and the excellent Levin, but no! there is not one such.”

“But listen —”

“Listen to you, while you tell me that Levin von Knud was unworthy some paltry recompense!”

“I swear that it is not —”

“I know you all; you will soon be insisting upon it that he is a knave and hypocrite and villain, like all the rest of you.”

“No, upon my honor.”

“How do I know? Perhaps he has betrayed some friend or persecuted his benefactor, as you all have done, or poisoned his father, or murdered his mother.”

“You are sadly mistaken; I am very far from intending —”

“Do you know that it was he who induced the Vice-Chancellor Wind, as well as Scheel, Vinding,

and Lasson the justiciary, three of my judges, to give their opinions against the infliction of the death penalty? And do you expect me to listen in cold blood to your slanders? Yes, that is the way he treated me, and yet I had always done him more harm than good; for I was like you, vile and wicked."

During this extraordinary interview Levin's generous nature was singularly moved. Being made the object of the most outspoken insults and the most sincere praise at the same moment, he did not know what attitude to adopt in the face of such brutal compliments, and such flattering discourtesy. He was both hurt and touched. At one moment he was moved to wrath, and his next impulse was to thank Schumacker. Present and unrecognized, he loved to hear the brutally frank old man defend an absent friend, in him and against him; but he would have been glad if his advocate had put a thought less bitterness and acrimony into his panegyric. However, in his inmost heart the savage praise heaped upon Captain Levin touched him more deeply than the insults flung in the face of the Governor of Drontheim wounded him. He gazed good-humoredly upon the disgraced favorite, and took the course of allowing his wrath and his gratitude to have full sway. At last, after a long declamation against human ingratitude, Schumacker fell back exhausted upon his chair and into the arms of poor, trembling Ethel, exclaiming piteously: —

"O men! what did I do to you that you should treat me thus?"

The general had not yet succeeded in touching upon the important matter which led to his descent upon Munckholm. All his disinclination to worry the prisoner by questioning him returned ; his sympathy and his awakened sensibility were re-enforced by two weighty considerations : the state of agitation into which Schumacker had worked himself left little room to hope that he could reply satisfactorily ; and in the second place, when he came to look the matter squarely in the face, it did not seem possible to the trustful Levin that such a man could be a conspirator. And yet, how could he leave Drontheim without questioning the prisoner ? This painful necessity of his office once more overcame his hesitation, and he began thus, in the mildest tone which he had at his command : —

“ Pray moderate your excitement a bit, Count Schumacker.”

The worthy governor had the happy inspiration of reconciling the respect he was bound to pay to the sentence of degradation with the consideration called forth by the misfortune of the degraded minister, by thus uniting his honorary title with his plebeian name.

“ It is a painful duty,” he continued, “ which requires me to come — ”

“ First of all,” interposed the prisoner, “ permit me, Herr Governor, to recur to a subject which interests me much more than anything your Excellency may have to say to me. You assured me just now that this idiot Levin had been rewarded for his services. I am most anxious to know how.”

"His Majesty, Herr von Griffenfeld, promoted Levin to the rank of general, and for more than twenty years the idiot, as you choose to call him, has been tranquilly growing older, honored with that military dignity, and with the favor of his king."

Schumacker hung his head.

"Yes, that idiot of a Levin who cared so little about dying a captain, will die a general; and the clever Schumacker who expected to die grand-chancellor, is sinking into the grave a prisoner of state."

As he spoke the captive covered his face with his hands, and his aged frame was shaken with his sighs. Ethel, who understood nothing of the conversation, except that it made her father sad, sought to divert his attention.

"Look, father; there is a light shining in the northern sky which I never noticed before."

Night had fallen, and the darkness brought into view a feeble glimmer, far away to the north, apparently on the summit of some distant mountain. Schumacker's eyes and thoughts did not turn incessantly northward as Ethel's did, and he made no reply. But the general was struck by the young girl's remark.

"It may be a fire lighted by the rebellious miners," he said to himself; and the thought brought him back once more to the object of his visit.

"Herr Griffenfeld," he said, "I am very sorry to annoy you; but it is absolutely necessary that you should submit —"

"I understand, Herr Governor; it is not enough for me to pass my days in this donjon, to live a

blighted and lonely life, to have none but bitter memories of grandeur and power; but you must needs come and intrude upon my solitude to lay bare my sorrow, and laugh at my misery. As the noble-hearted Levin von Knud, of whom several of your physical characteristics remind me, is a general like yourself, I should have been only too fortunate if the post which you occupy had been given to him; for he, I promise you, Herr Governor, would not have come to harass a poor wretch in his prison."

The general had been on the point of revealing his identity more than once in the course of this strange interview, in order to give it a different turn. But Schumacker's indirect reproach made it impossible for him to do so. It agreed so well with his own inmost feelings that it fairly made him ashamed of his purpose. Nevertheless he attempted to reply to Schumacker's crushing insinuation. Strangely enough, the very difference between their respective natures had made the two men exchange positions. The judge was, in a certain sense, made to justify himself to the accused.

"But if his duty required it," said the general, "do not doubt that Levin von Knud —"

"I do doubt it, Herr Governor!" cried Schumacker; "do not you yourself doubt that he would have declined with all the generous scorn and indignation of his nature, the duty of spying upon a wretched prisoner, and adding to his misery? Go to, I knew him better than you; under no circumstances would he have accepted the office of executioner. Now, Herr General, I am ready to listen. Do what

you call your duty. What does your Excellency want with me?"

The old minister proudly fixed his eyes upon the governor's, but all the latter's firmness had deserted him. His original repugnance to the task had returned upon him, and he could not overcome it.

"He is right," he said to himself; "the idea of worrying the life out of the poor fellow on mere suspicion! Let them find some other than myself to do it!"

These reflections produced a speedy result; he walked up to the wondering Schumacker, and grasped his hand; then rushed from the room.

"Count Schumacker," he said, "retain your high opinion of Levin von Knud."

XXV.

Lion (roaring). Oh —

[*Thisbe runs off.*]

Demetrius. Well roared, lion!

SHAKESPEARE: *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

THE traveller, who journeys in our day among the snow-covered mountains which surround the lake of Smiasen like a white girdle, will find no vestige of what the Norwegians of the seventeenth century called the ruins of Arbar. No one has ever known to what race of architects or to what style of architecture those ruins, if we may give them that name, should be ascribed.

On emerging from the forest which borders the southern portion of the lake, and after ascending a slope dotted here and there with fragments of wall and remains of ruined towers, the traveller will notice a vaulted opening, in the side of the mountain. This opening, which is now entirely obstructed by landslides, was formerly the entrance to a sort of gallery hewn in the living rock, and leading directly into the bowels of the mountain. It was dimly lighted by conical air holes cut in the arch at equal intervals, and ended in a large oval-shaped hall, partly carved out of the rock, and surrounded by walls of Cyclopean masonry. Around the sides of this hall were

roughly hewn granite figures set in deep niches. Some of these mystic images had fallen from their pedestals, and were lying about promiscuously on the rocky floor with other shapeless masses, covered with grass and moss, thickly peopled with lizards and beetles and all the hideous creeping things which abound in such spots.

The daylight found its way into the place only through a sort of doorway opposite the end of the gallery. This doorway, when seen from a certain direction, had the ogive shape, but was very roughly cut, and belonged to no particular period ; it was evident that the architect had simply happened upon it. Although the bottom of this opening was on a level with the floor, it might well have been called a window, for it opened upon a sheer precipice of great height ; and it was impossible to understand the purpose of the three or four stairs which were suspended over the chasm, outside this strange aperture and immediately below it.

This hall formed the interior of a gigantic turret, which, from the side toward the precipice, looked like one of the peaks of the mountain. The turret stood quite alone, and nobody could say of what manner of structure it had once formed a part. But above it, upon a plateau inaccessible to the boldest and most active hunter, was a huge mass, which might have been taken either for a rounded rock, or for the ruins of a colossal arch, — it was impossible to say which it was because of the distance. This turret, and this crumbling arch were known to the peasants by the name of the ruins of Arbar. The

origin of the name was as uncertain as the origin of the monument.

On a rock in the centre of this elliptical apartment, sat a little man, clothed in the skins of wild beasts, whom we have already had occasion to introduce several times in the course of this narrative. His back was turned to the light, or rather to the faint twilight which found its way into the gloomy turret when the sun was shining its brightest at noonday. This light was not sufficient to enable one to distinguish the nature of the object over which the little man was stooping. The dull groaning which could be heard from time to time seemed to come from that object, whatever it was, judging from the feeble and convulsive movements which it seemed to be making. Sometimes the little man sat up straight, and put to his lips a kind of cup, which resembled a human skull in shape ; it seemed to be filled with a smoking liquid, the color of which it was not possible to distinguish, and he drank long and deep of it.

Suddenly he rose to his feet.

"Somebody is walking in the gallery, I believe ; has the chancellor of the two kingdoms arrived already ?"

These words were followed by a burst of horrible laughter, ending in a savage roar, to which a howl from the gallery made answer.

"Oho !" rejoined the tenant of the ruins of Arbar, "that is no man, but it's an enemy all the same ; it's a wolf."

Even as he spoke a huge wolf emerged suddenly

from the arched gallery, stood still for a moment, and then crawled obliquely toward the man, with his belly on the ground and his gleaming eyes fixed upon him.

“Aha! it’s the old gray wolf! — the oldest wolf in all Smiasen forest. Good-morrow, wolf; your eyes glisten; you are hungry, and the scent of the dead bodies attracts you. Soon your dead body will attract other hungry wolves. Welcome, wolf of Smiasen; I have always longed to meet you. You are so old that it is said you cannot die. That will be said no more after to-day.”

The animal replied with a frightful howl, gathered himself together, and was upon the little man with one spring.

He did not recoil an inch. With the rapidity of light he encircled the wolf’s body with his right arm (he was standing in front of him on his hind legs with his forepaws on his shoulders) and with his left hand protected his face from his adversary’s cavernous maw, seizing him by the throat with such a grip that the animal was forced to raise his head, and could hardly utter a cry of pain.

“Wolf of Smiasen,” said the little man, triumphantly, “you are tearing my frock, but your skin shall replace it.”

Just as he spoke, mingling with his boasting some words in an outlandish jargon, a convulsive movement of the wolf caused the man to stumble over the stones with which the floor was strewn. They fell together, and the roaring of the human monster was confounded with the howling of the beast.

Forced to loosen his hold upon the wolf's throat as he fell, the little man already felt his sharp teeth burying themselves in his shoulder, when, as they rolled over and over on the ground, the combatants came in contact with a huge, shaggy, white body, which was lying in the darkest corner of the hall.

It was a bear, and he awoke grumbling from his deep sleep.

The sluggish eyes of this new personage were no sooner opened sufficiently to enable him to make out what was going on, than he hurled himself furiously, not upon the man, but upon the wolf, who was uppermost at that moment; he seized him with his jaws by the middle of the body, and thus released the creature with the face of a man.

The latter individual, however, instead of appearing grateful for so great a service, rose all covered with blood, rushed at the bear, and gave him a violent kick in the side, as a dog's master might do when the dog had done wrong.

"Friend, who called upon you to interfere?"

These words were accompanied by exclamations of rage and grinding of the teeth.

"Away with you!" he added with a roar.

The bear, who received the blow from the man's foot simultaneously with one from the wolf's teeth, murmured in a plaintive sort of way, and hung his heavy head, releasing his hold of the starving beast, who rushed at the man with renewed fury.

While the struggle continued, the despised bear returned to the place where he had been lying, and sat gravely down on his haunches, gazing indifferently

upon the two raging adversaries, and passing one of his fore paws after the other across the end of his white snout.

As the dean of the wolves of Smiasen returned to the charge, the little man seized his bleeding muzzle, and by an incredible exertion of strength and dexterity succeeded in holding his jaws tightly closed with his hands. The beast struggled furiously, writhing with rage and pain ; bloody foam fell from his compressed lips, and his eyes, swollen with fury, seemed to start from their spheres. Of the two adversaries, the one whose bones were ground by sharp teeth, and whose flesh was torn by scorching claws, was not the man, but the wild beast ; the one whose howls had the most savage and blood-curdling accent was not the wild beast, but the man.

At last the latter, mustering all his strength, which was well-nigh exhausted by the protracted resistance of the old wolf, pressed the creature's jaws together with both hands with such a vice-like pressure that blood spurted from his mouth and nostrils ; his eyes of flame grew dim, and half-closed ; he tottered and fell moribund at his vanquisher's feet. The feeble twitching of his tail, and the intermittent convulsive trembling of his body were the only indications that he was not quite dead.

Suddenly a violent convulsion shook his frame for the last time, and all signs of life ceased.

"That's the end of you, old wolf!" exclaimed the little man, with a contemptuous kick ; "did you think that you would live to grow any older after falling in with me ? No more will you run stealthily over

the snow following the trail and the odor of your prey ; you are fit food for other wolves and for vultures now yourself. You have devoured many travellers who had lost their way around Smiasen, during your long life of murder and carnage ; now you are dead yourself, and will devour no more men, more's the pity."

He seized a sharp stone, and bending over the warm, quivering body of the wolf, broke the joints of his legs, severed the head from the trunk, slit the skin down the whole length of the body, and tore it off, as one might remove his coat ; in the twinkling of an eye the terrible creature was naught but a naked, bleeding carcass. He next threw the skin over his torn and bleeding shoulders, turning the fleshy side out, all damp as it was, and covered with long streaks of blood.

"I must needs wear the skin of wild beasts," he growled between his teeth, "for human skin is not thick enough to keep out the cold."

While he communed thus with himself, his aspect made doubly hideous by his hideous trophy, the bear, weary of inaction doubtless, stealthily crept up to the other object lying in the shadow, which we mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, and soon a crunching sound arose in that obscure portion of the hall, mingled with faint sighs and agonizing groans. The little man turned in that direction.

"Friend !" he cried, threateningly ; "ah ! you wretch ! Here, come here !"

He picked up a huge stone, and threw it at the monster, who was dazed by the blow, and slowly tore

himself away from his banquet, licking his red lips, and crouched at the little man's feet, raising his enormous head, and curving his back into the shape of a bow, as if to ask pardon for his indiscretion.

Thereupon the two monsters, for such we may well call the occupant of the ruins of Arbar, exchanged certain significant growls. Those of the man expressed supremacy and wrath, those of the bear entreaty and submission.

"There," said the man, pointing with his crooked finger to the wolf's flayed body, "there's your prey; leave mine to me."

The bear smelt of the carcass, shook his head discontentedly, and looked up in the face of the man who seemed his master.

"I understand," he said; "that is too dead for you already, while the other is still breathing. You are very refined in your tastes, Friend, — as much so as a man; you require your food to be alive when you put your teeth in it; you like to feel the flesh die under your ministrations; you take no pleasure except in suffering. We are much alike; for I am no man, Friend, I am far above that miserable race; I am a wild beast like yourself. I would that you could speak, Friend, my comrade, to tell me whether the joy with which your wolf's entrails quiver when you are devouring the entrails of a man, is equal to my joy; but no, I should rather not hear you speak, lest your voice should remind me of the human voice. Yes, growl away there at my feet, — such a growl as makes the goatherd, lost among the mountains, tremble! It is pleasant to me as the voice

of a friend, because to him it announces an enemy. Lift up your head, Friend ; lick my hands with that tongue which has so often lapped up human blood. Your teeth are white like mine, and yet it's not our fault that they are not as red as a fresh wound ; but blood washes away blood. More than once I have seen from the depths of some dark cavern the maidens of Kole or Oëlmœe bathing their bare feet in the rushing torrent, singing sweetly the while ; but I prefer your hairy jaws and your hoarse growl to their velvety skin and their melodious voices, because they terrify man."

While he was speaking he sat down and abandoned his hand to the caresses of the monster, who rolled on his back at his feet, and displayed his affection in a thousand ways, as a spaniel shows off his tricks upon his mistress's sofa.

The most extraordinary thing was the intelligent understanding with which he seemed to listen to his master's words. The strange monosyllables which were plentifully sprinkled among them he seemed to understand especially well, and he manifested his comprehension by suddenly raising his head, or producing some confused sounds far down in his throat.

"Men say that I avoid them," the little man resumed, "but, on the contrary, they avoid me ; they do through fear what I do through hatred. But you know, Friend, that I am very glad to meet a man when I am hungry or thirsty."

Suddenly he perceived far off in the gallery a reddish light, which gradually increased in size, casting a faint reflection upon the damp walls.

“And here is one now. When you speak of hell, Satan shows his horn. Ho! there, Friend;” he added, turning to the bear; “ho! there, up with you!”

The animal at once stood erect.

“Good! I must reward your obedience by satisfying your appetite.”

With that he stooped down over the object which lay on the ground. There was a noise as of bones splintered by a hatchet, but it was no longer accompanied by sighs or groans.

“It would seem,” muttered the little man, “that we two are no longer to live alone in this mansion of Arbar. Here, good Friend, finish the feast you began.”

He threw toward the outer doorway which we mentioned above what he had detached from the object stretched at his feet. The bear pounced upon it with such avidity that the keenest glance would have failed to detect in the tempting morsel a resemblance in shape to a human arm, clad in a piece of green stuff of the same shade as the uniform of the arquebusiers of Munckholm.

“Some one comes,” said the little man, with his eye fastened on the light, which grew constantly larger. “Comrade Friend, leave me alone a moment. Outside you go!”

The obedient monster trotted to the door, backed down the outside steps, and disappeared, with a satisfied howl, carrying his disgusting quarry in his jaws.

At the same instant a man of large stature made

his appearance at the end of the gallery, whose winding depths still reflected a dim light. He was wrapped in a long brown cloak, and carried a dark lantern, from which he threw the light full upon the little man's face.

He was still seated on the stone, with folded arms.

"You are not welcome," he cried, "for you come hither in pursuit of a purpose, and not by the guidance of instinct."

The stranger made no reply, but seemed to be scrutinizing him carefully.

"Oh! look at me," he continued, tossing his head; "an hour from now you may not have breath to boast that you have seen me."

The new-comer threw the light over his whole person from head to foot, and seemed more surprised than alarmed.

"Well, what are you wondering at?" the little man went on, with a laugh which resembled the noise made in cracking a skull. "I have arms and legs as well as you; but my limbs are not, as yours will be, food for jackals and crows."

The stranger at last replied, in a low but firm voice, as if he feared nothing except being overheard: —

"Listen: I come not as a foe, but as a friend."

"In that case, why did you not lay aside your human form?" the other interposed.

"My purpose is to do you a service, if you are the man I seek."

"That is to say you expect a service from me.

Man, you waste your steps ; I render no service save to those who are weary of life."

"By your words," continued the stranger, "I know that you are the man I seek ; but your height — Hans of Iceland is a giant ; you cannot be he."

"It's the first time that any one ever doubted it in my presence."

"What ! you are the man ?"

The stranger drew nearer to the little man.

"Why, Hans of Iceland is said to be of colossal size."

"Add my renown to my height and you will see that I am taller than Hecla."

"Tell me truly, I beg you ; are you really Hans, a native of Klipstadur in Iceland ?"

"I don't reply to that question with words," said the little man, rising ; and the look which he darted at the rash stranger made him fall hastily back.

"Then limit your reply to that look, in God's name," he exclaimed, almost imploringly, and casting a glance at the gallery indicative of his regret that he ever emerged from it. "Your interests alone have brought me here."

When he entered the hall the new-comer had only a partial view of its occupant, and so succeeded in retaining his composure ; but when the host of Arbar rose to his feet, with his tiger's face, his powerful limbs, his bleeding shoulders partly covered with a fresh, dripping skin, his huge hands armed with long, sharp nails, and his flaming eyes, the adventurous stranger shuddered, like an ignoramus

who thinks he is stroking an eel, and feels the sting of a viper.

“My interests?” repeated the monster. “Do you mean that you have come to inform me that there is a spring to be poisoned, a village to be set on fire, or an arquebusier from Munckholm to be murdered?”

“Perhaps. Listen to me: the miners of Norway have risen in revolt. You know what disastrous results follow a revolt.”

“Yes; murder, rapine, sacrilege, burning, pillage.”

“I offer you all those.”

The little man began to laugh.

“I do not need that you should offer me what I can take for myself.”

The blood-curdling, sneering laugh which accompanied these words made the stranger recoil anew. However, it did not deter him from his purpose.

“I offer you, in the name of the miners, the leadership of the insurrection.”

For a moment the little man said nothing; but suddenly his forbidding countenance took on an expression of infernal malevolence.

“Is it really in their name that you offer it to me?” he said.

This question seemed to disconcert the new-comer; but he was so sure that his identity was unknown to his formidable companion that he soon recovered his self-possession.

“Why have the miners risen?” the dwarf asked.

“To throw off the burden of the royal guardianship.”

"Is that their only purpose?" continued the other, in the same tone of raillery.

"They also propose to free the prisoner of Munckholm."

"And is that the only object of this movement?" again queried the little man, in the tone which proved so disconcerting to the stranger.

"I know of no other," he stammered.

"Ah! you know of no other!"

These words were uttered in the same tone of fiendish irony. The stranger, to do away with the embarrassment which they caused him, drew a stout purse from beneath his cloak, and threw it at the monster's feet.

"There is the honorarium for your services," he said.

The little man thrust it away disdainfully with his foot.

"I want none of it. For God's sake, do you suppose that if I thirsted for your gold or your blood I would await your permission to satisfy my thirst?"

The stranger made a gesture of surprise, almost of terror.

"It's a present which the royal miners handed to me for you."

"I want none of it, I tell you. Gold is of no use to me. A man willingly sells his soul, but does not sell his life; that we have to take from him."

"I will say, then, to the leaders of the miners that the redoubtable Hans of Iceland accepts the position offered him, without compensation."

"I do not accept it."

The curt, sharp tone in which these words were spoken seemed to produce a very disagreeable effect upon the pseudo-envoy of the insurgent miners.

"What!" he exclaimed.

"No!" rejoined the other.

"You refuse to take part in an enterprise which offers you so many advantages?"

"I can pillage farm-houses, lay waste villages, and murder peasants or soldiers all by myself."

"But reflect that, if you accept the offer of the miners, your impunity is assured."

"Do you promise me impunity also in the name of the miners?" laughed the dwarf.

"I will not conceal from you," replied the stranger, mysteriously, "that I make the promise in the name of an influential personage who is interested in the revolt."

"And is this influential personage sure of not being hanged himself?"

"If you knew who he is, you would not shake your head so."

"Ah! indeed! Who is he, pray?"

"That is something I cannot tell you."

The little man walked up to the stranger, and brought his hand down heavily on his shoulder.

"Would you like me to tell you?" he demanded with a sardonic grin.

The stranger made an involuntary movement of fear mingled with wounded pride. He was as much taken aback by the monster's abrupt question as by his savage familiarity.

"I am making sport of you," the latter continued.

“ You do not know that I know everything. This influential personage is the grand chancellor of Denmark and Norway, and the grand chancellor of Denmark and Norway is — yourself.”

Such was the fact. When he reached the ruins of Arbar, whither we left him journeying with Musdæmon, Count von Ahlefeld determined to entrust to no one but himself the duty of tempting the brigand, having not the slightest suspicion that he was known to him, and his visit anticipated. Indeed, he never succeeded subsequently, with all his adroitness and power, in discovering how Hans came to be so well informed. Was it through Musdæmon's treachery? It was Musdæmon, to be sure, who first suggested to the noble count the idea of presenting himself in person to the brigand; but what profit could he hope to reap from such perfidy? Had the brigand found upon some of his victims papers relating to the grand chancellor's plans? But Frederic von Ahlefeld was the only living being beside Musdæmon who was informed of his father's plan, and light-headed as he was, he was not idiotic enough to endanger such a secret. Besides, he was in garrison at Munckholm; at least, the grand chancellor so believed. They who read the sequel of this scene, although they may be no better able than Count von Ahlefeld to solve the problem, will see how much foundation existed for this last supposition.

One of the most noticeable of Count von Ahlefeld's traits was presence of mind. When the little man so unceremoniously called him by name

he could not restrain a surprised exclamation ; but in the twinkling of an eye the expression of his pale and haughty face changed from fear and astonishment to calmness and confidence.

“ Well, yes,” he said, “ I will be frank with you ; I am really the chancellor. But do you be equally frank.”

The little man interrupted him with a burst of laughter.

“ Did I make you ask me many times to tell you my name and your own as well ? ”

“ Tell me with equal frankness how you knew who I was.”

“ Did no one ever tell you that Hans of Iceland could see through the mountains ? ”

The count was not to be balked.

“ Look upon me as a friend,” he said.

“ Your hand, Count von Ahlefeld ! ” said the dwarf, roughly. Then he looked the minister squarely in the face, and added : —

“ If our two souls were to depart from our bodies at this moment, I verily believe that Satan would hesitate before making up his mind which belonged to the monster.”

The haughty nobleman bit his lips till the blood ran ; but being placed between the fear of the brigand and the necessity of making him his instrument, he did not otherwise manifest his chagrin.

“ Do not trifle with your own interests, but accept the leadership of the insurrection, and rely on my gratitude.”

“ Chancellor of Norway, you count upon the suc-

cess of your undertakings like an old woman who dreams about the dress she is going to spin with stolen hemp, while the cat is raising the deuce with her distaff."

"Once more, I bid you reflect before you reject my offers."

"Once more, I, a brigand and outlaw, say to you, grand chancellor of the two kingdoms, no!"

"I expected a different reply after the signal service you have already rendered me."

"What service?"

"Was not Captain Dispolsen murdered by you?"

"It may be so, Count von Ahlefeld; I know him not. Who is the man of whom you speak?"

"What! did not the iron casket of which he was the bearer fall into your hands?"

This question seemed to refresh the brigand's memory.

"Wait!" he said; "yes, I do remember that man and his iron casket. It was on the beach at Urchtal."

"If you could, at least, place that casket in my hands, my gratitude would know no bounds. Tell me, what has become of it? I know that it is in your power."

The minister was so persistent on this point that Hans was struck by it.

"So this iron box is of great importance in your Grace's eyes, is it, Chancellor of Norway?"

"Yes."

"What reward shall I have if I tell you where you can find it?"

“Whatever you choose, dear Hans of Iceland.”

“Very well ; I won’t tell you.”

“Nonsense, you are joking. Think of the service you would render me.”

“That is just what I am thinking of.”

“I will assure you a large fortune, and will ask the king to pardon you.”

“Rather ask me to pardon you,” said Hans. “Listen to me, Grand Chancellor of Denmark and Norway ; tigers do not devour hyenas. I propose to allow you to go out from my presence alive, because you are an infernal villain, and every instant of your life, every thought of your brain, brings misfortune to your fellow-man, and makes you a criminal of deeper dye. But seek me out no more, for if you do I will teach you that my hatred for mankind spares none, not even gallows-birds. As for your captain, flatter not yourself that I murdered him on your account ; it was his uniform that sealed his doom, as it did this other wretch’s, whose throat I did not cut to do you a service, I assure you.”

As he spoke he seized the noble count’s arm, and drew him toward the body that lay in the shadow ; and just as he said the last word the light from the dark lantern fell upon it. It was a mangled corpse, clothed in the uniform of an officer of the Munckholm arquebusiers. The chancellor drew near with a feeling of loathing. Suddenly his gaze rested upon the pallid, bleeding face of the dead man. The blue, half-opened lips, the bristling hair, the livid cheeks, the lifeless eyes, did not prevent his recognizing it. He uttered a heart-rending cry : —

“ Merciful Heaven ! Frederic ! my son ! ”

Doubt not that in those hearts which seem the most withered and obdurate there is always a corner wherein still abides some sentiment of affection, of which they are themselves unconscious, and which seems to have hidden itself among their passions and vices as a mysterious witness, to become some day an avenger. One would say that it exists there in order to make the criminal acquainted some day with bitter sorrow. The perverse man carries it in his breast, and knows it not, because no ordinary affliction is keen enough to pierce the thick shell of selfishness and villany which envelops it ; but let one of life's infrequent, crushing sorrows come upon him unexpectedly, and it plunges into the depths of his heart like a sharp sword, and cuts to the quick. Then this unsuspected affection makes its existence known to the wretched criminal, with the greater intensity, and causing the greater suffering, the more completely it had lain concealed before, because the sting of misfortune has to stir the heart the more violently in order to reach it. Nature awakes and runs riot ; it delivers the poor wretch over to unwonted despair and incredible suffering ; he experiences in a single instant all the pangs he has laughed at for so many years. His heart is torn by the anguish of remorse for the past and by the sense of helplessness for the future ; it struggles convulsively to throw off the stupor and depression which weigh heavily upon it. He seems to have caught a glimpse of hell in life, and to have become aware of the existence of something worse than despair.

Count von Ahlefeld loved his son without suspecting it. We say his son, because he knew nothing of the countess's infidelity, and in his eyes Frederic, the direct heir of his title, was entitled to be so designated. Believing him to be still at Munckholm he was very far from expecting to find him in the tower of Arbar, and to find him there dead! But there he lay, a bleeding, lifeless mass; it was he, beyond question. We can imagine what took place within him when the certainty that he loved him made its way into his heart side by side with the certainty that he had lost him. All the emotions which these last sentences have tried vainly to describe burst upon his heart together, like a peal of thunder. Stunned in a measure by the blow, and by his terror and despair, he recoiled from the sight, wringing his hand and repeating piteously:—

“My son! my son!”

The brigand began to laugh; and an awful thing it was to hear his fiendish laughter mingling with the lamentations of a father over the dead body of his son.

“By Ingolphus my ancestor! you may call him all you please, Count von Ahlefeld, but you will not awaken him.”

Suddenly his ferocious face darkened, and he said gloomily:—

“Weep for your son; I am avenging mine.”

The sound of hurried steps in the gallery interrupted him; and as he turned his head wonderingly in that direction, four tall men with drawn swords rushed into the hall; a fifth, much shorter and quite

stout, followed them with a torch in one hand and a sword in the other. He was enveloped in a brown cloak like the chancellor's.

"My lord!" he cried; "we heard you, and we hurried to assist you."

The reader has of course recognized Musdœmon, and the four servants who were in attendance on the count.

When the hall was lighted by the rays of the torch the five new-comers stopped, transfixed with horror; and it was in very truth a horrifying spectacle. On one side were the bleeding remains of the wolf; on the other the mutilated corpse of the young officer; and between the two the father, with haggard eyes, calling wildly upon his son, and the terrible brigand, turning his hideous countenance toward his assailants, with an expression of surprise entirely unmixed with fear.

With the arrival of this unexpected re-enforcement, the thought of vengeance took possession of the count, and transformed his despair into rage.

"Death to that brigand!" he cried, drawing his sword. "He has murdered my son! Death! Death!"

"He has murdered Herr Frederic, you say?" said Musdœmon, and the torch which he held did not show the slightest change in his expression.

"Death! Death!" the count repeated in a frenzy.

All six rushed upon Hans in a body. Taken by surprise by the sudden onset, he fell back toward the opening which looked upon the precipice, with a ferocious roar, indicative of anger rather than of fear.

Six swords were pointed at his breast, and his glance was more inflamed, and his expression more threatening than those of any of his assailants. He had seized his axe of stone, and being compelled by the number of the attacking party to act upon the defensive, he whirled it around in his hand so swiftly that it protected his whole body like a shield. The swords rang against the axe-head and threw off myriads of sparks ; but not one of them reached his body. But he was fatigued by his recent combat with the wolf, and gradually lost ground, until he was forced back to the opening.

“ Courage ! my friends ! ” cried the count ; “ let us throw the monster over the precipice.”

“ The stars will fall into it before I shall,” retorted the outlaw.

But the ardor and boldness of the attacking party were increased tenfold when they had forced the little man to step down one step of the staircase which hung over the abyss.

“ Good, good ! force him over ! ” exclaimed the grand chancellor ; “ he must fall now ; one more effort ! Villain ! you have committed your last crime. Courage, good fellows ! ”

While he kept his axe revolving with his right hand, the brigand, not deigning to reply, took in his left hand a horn which hung at his belt, and putting it to his lips blew a prolonged, hoarse blast, which he repeated several times, and which was suddenly answered by a deep roar from the depths of the abyss.

A moment or two later, as the count and his

satellites, exultant at having compelled the outlaw to descend another step, were pressing him closer and closer, the enormous head of a white bear appeared at the broken end of the staircase. The assailants fell back in amazement, not unmixed with terror.

The bear climbed heavily up the staircase, showing his bleeding jaws and sharp teeth.

"Thanks, good Friend!" cried the outlaw.

Taking advantage of the astonishment of his opponents, he leaped upon the bear's back, and the creature at once began to descend the stairs again backward, still presenting his threatening countenance to his master's enemies.

They soon recovered from their stupefaction, and saw that the bear was carrying the outlaw out of their reach, clambering down the precipice, in the same way doubtless that he came up, clinging to old tree-trunks and jutting rocks. They attempted to throw blocks of stone down upon him, but before they succeeded in loosening one of the huge masses, which had lain embedded there for so many years, Hans and his strange steed had disappeared in a cavern.

XXVI.

No, no, let us laugh no more. Look you, this very thing which seemed so amusing to me has also its serious side, very serious, too, like everything in the universe. Believe me, this word "chance" is a blasphemy; nothing under the sun happens by chance; and can you not see the manifest purpose of Providence in this?

LESSING : *Emilia Galotti*.

YES, the most profound design frequently lies hidden in what men call chance. There is in human events something like a mysterious hand which marks out their course and their result. We cry out at the caprice of fortune, at the strange freaks of fate, and lo ! terrifying flashes or rays of marvellous brilliancy suddenly emerge from the chaos, and human wisdom humbles itself before the exalted lessons of destiny.

Suppose, for example, that when Frederic von Ahlefeld was displaying his magnificent clothes, his coxcombry, and his high-flown eloquence before the admiring eyes of the fair dames of Copenhagen in some sumptuous drawing-room, — suppose, we say, that some man who could read the future had intruded upon his frivolous thoughts with revelations of disaster to come ; suppose he had told him that the day would come when the uniform of which he was so proud would cause his destruction ; that a monster with human face would drink his blood, as he, the

thoughtless voluptuary, drank the wines of France and Bohemia; that his hair, for which he could not procure enough of essences and perfumes, would sweep up the dust in a wild beast's lair; that his arm, which he offered with such exquisite grace to Copenhagen's loveliest, would be tossed to a bear to be gnawed like the bone of an antelope; how would Frederic have received these dismal prophecies? With a burst of laughter and a pirouette; and the most disheartening thing is, that all mankind would have applauded the madman.

Let us go a little deeper into this matter of destiny. Is it not a strangely mysterious thing that the crime of the Count and Countess von Ahlefeld should thus recoil upon their own heads? They laid a dastardly plot against the daughter of a helpless prisoner; the poor girl found *by chance* a protector, who deemed it wise to send away their son, the chosen instrument of their abominable scheme. This son, their only hope, was sent far away from the scene of his proposed seduction, and had hardly reached his destination when another avenging *chance* caused his death. Thus, in attempting to bring dishonor upon an innocent maiden whom they detested, they thrust their own guilty but beloved son into the tomb. It was by their own fault that these wretches were made to suffer.

XXVII.

Ah! there is our lovely countess! Pardon me, madame, if I cannot avail myself of the honor of your visit to-day; I am very busy. Another time, dear countess, another time; but to-day I will detain you no longer. — *The Prince and Orsina.*

EARLY in the morning following his visit to Munckholm, the governor of Drontheim ordered the horses to be put to his travelling-carriage, hoping to get away while the Countess von Ahlefeld was still asleep; but we believe we have already said that the countess was a light sleeper.

The general had just signed the last of his recommendations to the bishop, who was to hold the reins of government during his absence. He had risen to his feet and was putting on his fur-lined overcoat, preparatory to going out, when the usher announced the wife of the grand chancellor.

This mischance disconcerted the old soldier, who was accustomed to laugh in face of the volley of a hundred cannon, but not in face of a woman's wiles. However, he bade the countess farewell with reasonably good grace, and did not allow his ill-humor to appear in his face until she put her mouth to his ear with a cunning expression, which imported the necessity for secrecy.

“ Well, general, what did he say? ”

“Who? Poël? He said that the carriage was ready.”

“I refer to the prisoner at Munckholm, general.”

“Ah!”

“Did he make satisfactory replies to your questions?”

“Why — yes, indeed, countess,” said the governor, whose embarrassment can easily be imagined.

“Have you the proof that he is implicated in the revolt of the miners?”

“Noble lady, he is innocent!”

The phrase came unconsciously from Levin’s lips; then he stopped short, for he had given expression to a conviction of his heart, not of his mind.

“He is innocent!” the countess repeated, with an air of consternation; for she was in mortal terror lest Schumacker had really demonstrated to the general his innocence, which it was of such vital importance to the grand chancellor’s interests to asperse.

The governor had had time to reflect; he replied in a tone of voice which reassured the countess, because it revealed his doubt and annoyance: —

“Innocent — yes — if you wish —”

“If I wish, Herr General!”

And the evil-minded woman began to laugh.

That laugh wounded the governor deeply.

“Noble countess,” he said, “by your leave I will make a report of my interview with the former grand chancellor to none but the viceroy.”

With that he bowed low, and went down into the courtyard where his carriage awaited him.

“Yes, go,” said Countess von Ahlefeld to herself,

as she returned to her own apartments ; “ go, knight-errant, and let your absence deliver us from the protector of our enemies. Go ; your departure is the signal for my Frederic’s return. The idea of daring to send the handsomest beau in Copenhagen into those horrible mountains ! Happily it will be an easy matter now to obtain his recall.”

With this thought in her mind she said to her favorite tire-woman : —

“ Dear Lisbeth, you must send to Bergen for two dozen of the little combs which the fashionable youths wear in their hair ; you must also inquire about Scudéry’s latest novel, and see that my dear Frederic’s monkey is bathed in rose-water every morning.”

“ What ! my gracious mistress,” said Lisbeth, “ is it possible that Herr Frederic may return ? ”

“ Yes, it really is ; and in order to have him take any pleasure in seeing me again, I must do all that he asks. I want to prepare a surprise for him when he returns.”

Poor mother !

XXVIII.

Bernard runs swiftly along the banks of the Arlança. He is like a lion issuing from his cave in search of the hunters, and determined to vanquish them or die.

Has he really gone, the valiant and resolute Spaniard?

At a rapid gait, and holding in his hand a mighty lance on which he bases his hopes, Bernard follows the banks of the Arlança, — *Spanish Romances*.

ORDENER came down from the tower whence he had descried the Munckholm beacon, and wore himself out with fatigue searching in every direction for his ill-fated guide, Benignus Spiagudry. For a long time he called him and met with no response save the echo of his own voice among the ruins. Surprised, but not alarmed, by his mysterious disappearance, he concluded that he had been panic-stricken by some strange noise; and having soundly berated himself for leaving him alone for a few moments, he determined to pass the night on the cliff, in order to give him time to return. He ate a little, then wrapped himself in his cloak, lay down by the dying fire, pressed his lips to the lock of Ethel's hair, and was soon fast asleep; for one can sleep with an anxious heart when one's conscience is clear.

At sunrise he was stirring, but could find no trace of Spiagudry save his cloak and his wallet which were left in the tower, an evident sign that his flight had been very hasty. He gave up all hope of seeing

him again, at least on Oëlmœ cliff, and determined to set off without him, for he was to encounter Hans of Iceland at Walderhog on the following day.

The reader learned in the early chapters of this narrative that Ordener became inured in early youth to the hardships of a wandering and adventurous life. As he had already travelled in northern Norway several times, he needed no guide now that he knew where to find the outlaw. So he started off in a north-westerly direction on his lonely journey, in which he no longer had Benignus Spiagudry for a companion, to tell how much quartz or spar there was in every hill, what traditions were connected with every ruin, and whether this or that inequality in the surface was caused by the action of the Deluge, or by some volcanic disturbance of ancient times.

Throughout the day he journeyed across the mountains which diverge at intervals from the main range, that extends from one end of Norway to the other, and slope gradually down to the sea, to plunge therein at last; so that the coast of that country is naught but a succession of bold promontories and fiords, and the interior a similar alternation of mountains and valleys, — an extraordinary condition, which has caused Norway to be compared to the backbone of a fish.

Travelling in Norway in those days was not an attractive amusement. At times one was forced to take for his path the dry bed of a mountain stream, and again to cross, on a decayed tree-trunk, the same path, which had become a roaring torrent since the night before.

Ordener pursued his journey for some hours without any other indication that man existed in those regions than the occasional appearance of a wind-mill on top of a hill, or the noise of a distant forge, whose smoke waved about at the pleasure of the wind, like a black plume.

Now and then he fell in with a peasant riding a stunted gray horse, which carried its head close to the ground and was less uncouth in appearance than its master ; or a dealer in furs, sitting in a cart drawn by a pair of reindeer ; behind the cart a long rope would be dragging, with knots at frequent intervals, the said knots being supposed, as they jumped around in the road from one stone to another, to frighten off the wolves.

If Ordener asked the dealer in furs to direct him to the cave of Walderhog, the answer would be : —

“Keep to the northwest ; you will come to the village of Hervalyn, pass through the ravine of Dodlysax, and by night you can make Surb, which is but two miles from Walderhog.”

Thus the nomad trader, who cared for nothing beyond the names and location of the places which lay on his route.

But when Ordener put the same question to the peasant, who was deeply imbued with the traditions of the country and its fireside tales, that worthy would shake his head, and check his gray steed, saying : —

“Walderhog ! the Cave of Walderhog ! There the stones sing, and the bones dance ; and the demon Icelander lives there. Surely your Courtesy does n't mean to go to the cave of Walderhog ? ”

"Indeed, I do," Ordener would reply.

"Has your Courtesy lost your mother, or has your farm been burned, or your neighbor stolen your fat hog?"

"Nothing of the kind."

"In that case some magician must have cast a spell upon your Courtesy."

"Goodman, I ask you to point out the road to Walderhog."

"That is what I am trying to do, my lord. Adieu. Keep to the north! I know how you can go there, but I don't know how you will return."

And the peasant would cross himself, and go his way.

The dreary monotony of the journey was made more irksome by a fine, searching rain, which began to fall about mid-day, and increased the difficulties of the road. Even the birds hardly dared to leave their nests, and as Ordener trudged along, half-frozen, he could see nothing save an occasional goshawk or gerfalcon; or now and then a fish-hawk, which would start up at his approach, from among the reeds bordering some pond, carrying a fish in his claws.

It was quite dark when the young traveller, having threaded the thickets of birch and aspen which skirt the ravine of Dodlysax, reached the hamlet of Surb, where Spiagudry, as the reader may remember, proposed to fix his headquarters. The smell of tar and the smoke of pitcoal admonished Ordener that he was approaching a colony of fishermen. He walked

to the first hut which he could distinguish in the darkness. The low, narrow entrance was closed, according to the custom in Norway, by the skin of some huge fish; it was transparent, and at the moment the flickering red light of a fire could be seen through it.

He knocked upon the wooden door-frame, calling out: —

“A traveller!”

“Come in, come in!” said a voice from the interior of the hut.

At the same instant an obliging hand raised the skin, and Ordener was admitted into the conical dwelling of a Norwegian fisherman. It was a sort of round tent built of wood and earth. In the centre a fire was burning, in which the purple flame of the peat was wedded to the clear white blaze of the spruce. The fisherman, with his wife and two ragged children, was sitting near the fire at a table set with wooden plates and earthen cups. On the other side, among the nets and oars, two reindeer were lying asleep on a bed of leaves and skins, which was of much greater length than they required, the remaining space being evidently intended to accommodate the slumbers of the hosts and such guests as it should please Heaven to send them. It was not possible to grasp all the details of the interior arrangement of the hut at the first glance, for a heavy, acrid smoke, which made its way but slowly through a small aperture at the apex of the cone, enveloped everything in a thick, shifting cloud.

Ordener had no sooner crossed the threshold than

the fisherman and his wife rose and returned his salutation with the utmost friendliness and good-humor. The Norwegian peasants are very fond of travellers, as much perhaps from curiosity, which is a very noticeable trait among them, as from their natural leaning to hospitality.

"Herr Stranger," said the fisherman, "you must be cold and hungry; here is fire to dry your cloak, and good *rindebrod* to satisfy your hunger. Perhaps your Courtesy will then deign to tell us who you are, whence you come, whither you are going, and what tales the old dames tell in your country."

"Yes," added the wife, "and you can add to the *rindebrod*, which is very good, as my lord and master says, a nice bit of salted stock-fish, seasoned with whale oil. Take a seat, Herr Stranger."

"And if your Courtesy does not take kindly to Saint Usuph's¹ cheer," rejoined the man, "and will be patient for a moment, I will promise you a quarter of delicious roebuck or a wing of a royal pheasant. We are expecting the return of the best hunter in the three provinces; are n't we, Maase?"

The name, *Maase*, by which the fisherman called his wife is the Norwegian word for sea-gull. The woman did not seem to be in the least degree offended, whether because it was her real name, or because it was applied to her as a term of endearment.

"The best hunter! I should say so, indeed!" she replied, emphatically. "It's my brother, the famous Kennybol! God bless his path! He is passing a few days with us, and you can drink a draught or

¹ The patron saint of fishermen.

two of this good beer from his cup, Herr Stranger. He is a traveller, as you are."

"Many thanks, my worthy hostess," said Ordener, with a smile; "but I shall be obliged to content myself with your appetizing stock-fish and a piece of *rindebrod*. I shall not have time to wait for your brother, the mighty hunter. I must be off again at once."

The excellent Maase was aggrieved by the stranger's proposed speedy departure; at the same time that she was flattered by his encomiums upon her stock-fish and her brother.

"You are very good," she said. "But you can't mean to leave us so soon."

"I must."

"You propose to venture among these mountains at this time of night, and in such weather?"

"My business is most important."

The young man's replies aroused the innate curiosity of his hosts, as much as they excited their surprise.

The fisherman rose, and said: —

"You are under the roof of Christopher Buldus Braal; fisherman, in the village of Surb."

"And Maase Kennybol is his wife and his servant," the woman added.

When the Norwegian peasant desires to ask a stranger his name politely, he always begins by telling him his own.

"I am a traveller," Ordener replied, "who is sure neither of the name he bears, nor of the road he is travelling."

This strange reply did not seem to satisfy his host.

“By the crown of Gormon the Old,” he exclaimed, “I thought there was but one man in Norway at this moment who is not sure of his name, — I mean the Baron von Thorvick, who is soon to be called the Count von Danneskiold, they say, in honor of his glorious marriage with the daughter of the chancellor. At all events that is the latest news I heard at Drontheim. I congratulate you, Herr Stranger, on being in the same predicament with the son of the viceroy, Count Guldenlew.”

“Since your Courtesy seems to be unable to tell us anything concerning yourself,” said the woman, whose face was fairly aflame with curiosity, “can you not tell us something of what is going on, — of this famous marriage, for instance, which my lord and master heard mentioned?”

“Yes,” consequentially rejoined her lord and master; “that’s the latest news. Within a month the viceroy’s son is to marry the chancellor’s daughter.”

“I doubt it,” said Ordener.

“You doubt it, you say! But I tell you that there is no doubt about it. I had it from excellent authority. The man who told me heard of it from Herr Poël, the noble Baron von Thorvick’s — I should say the noble Count von Danneskiold’s — favorite servant. Can it be that the waters have become troubled within a week? Is this great match broken off?”

“I believe so,” the young man replied with a smile.

"If it is so, Herr stranger, I was wrong. One should not light the fire to fry the fish before it's in the net. But are you sure that it's broken off? From whom did you get the news?"

"From no one," said Ordener; "I arranged it so in my own head."

At this naïve remark the fisherman involuntarily departed from the inborn courtesy of his race by a prolonged burst of laughter.

"A thousand pardons," he said; "but it is easy to see that you are really a traveller, — and a foreigner, too, no doubt. Do you fancy, pray, that events are governed by your whims, and that the weather is fair or foul according to your will?"

Thereupon the fisherman, who was thoroughly posted on national affairs, like all Norwegian peasants, began to explain to Ordener what weighty reasons there were why the marriage should not be allowed to fall through: that it was of the utmost importance to the interests of the Ahlefeld family; that the viceroy could not refuse to gratify the king, who was very desirous to bring it about; furthermore, that it was said to be a true love-match. In a word, Braal the fisherman had no doubt that the marriage would take place; he would have been very glad to be half as sure that he would succeed the next day in killing the cursed dogfish which infested Master-Bick pool.

Ordener was but little disposed for a political discussion with a statesman of that type, and the arrival of a new personage extricated him from the dilemma.

"It's my brother!" cried old Maase.

And nothing less than the arrival of a brother would have availed to arouse her from the rapt admiration with which she was listening to her husband's long words.

While the two children were leaping noisily upon their uncle's neck, Braal gravely extended his hand to him.

"Welcome, brother," he said.

Then he turned to Ordener.

"Stranger, this is our brother, Kennybol, the famous hunter from the Kole mountains."

"I am very glad to see you," said the mountaineer, removing his bear-skin cap. "I find it but poor sport hunting here on the shore, brother, as you would undoubtedly find but poor fishing on our mountains. I believe I could fill my bag sooner hunting hobgoblins and fireflies in the misty forests of Queen Mab. Sister Maase, you are the first seagull I've been able to say good-day to at close quarters to-day. God have you in his keeping, my friends! Look! for this wretched fowl the first hunter in Drontheimhus has been scouring the country in such weather as this, until this time of night!"

As he spoke, he pulled a white moor-fowl from his pouch and tossed it on the table, vowing that the wretched creature was not worth the powder and shot.

"But," he added between his teeth, "my trusty arquebuse, thou shalt soon hunt larger game. If thou dost rest a while from elk and chamois, thou wilt soon have green cloaks and red doublets for targets."

The inquisitive Maase pricked up her ears at these words, which she just failed to catch.

“What’s that?” she asked; “what’s that you say, brother?”

“I say that there is always a talking spirit dancing under a woman’s tongue.”

“You are right, brother Kennybol,” cried the fisherman. “These daughters of Eve are all as curious as their mother. Didn’t you say something about green cloaks?”

“Brother Braal,” the hunter replied, ill-humoredly, “I confide my secrets to no one but my musket, because I am sure that it will not repeat them.”

“There is talk in the village,” the fisherman persisted, “of a rising among the miners. Do you know anything of it, brother?”

The mountaineer picked up his cap and pulled it over his eyes with a sidelong glance at the stranger; then he leaned toward his brother-in-law and said sharply in an undertone:—

“Silence!”

Braal shook his head.

“Brother Kennybol,” he said, “it does the fish no good to be dumb; it gets into the net all the same.”

For a moment there was perfect silence. The brothers were gazing at each other significantly; the children pulling out the tail-feathers of the bird on the table; the good wife listening to what was not being said; and Ordener looking on.

“If your larder is ill-supplied to-day,” the hunter began abruptly, evidently desirous to give a different turn to the conversation, “it will be different to-mor-

row. Brother Braal, you can cast your net for the king of fish, and I promise you some bear's-oil to season it with."

"Bear's-oil!" cried Maase. "Has a bear been seen in the neighborhood? Patrick, Regner, my children, I forbid your going out of the house. A bear!"

"Don't be alarmed, sister, you will have nothing to fear from him to-morrow. Yes, I did see a bear about two miles from Surb, — a white bear. He seemed to be carrying off a man, an animal rather. It may have been a goatherd, by the way, for goat-herds dress in skins. However, he was so far away that I could n't make out what it was. What surprised me was that he was carrying his prey on his back, instead of between his teeth."

"Really, brother?"

"Yes, and the animal must have been dead, for he did n't make the slightest resistance."

"But if he was dead," suggested the fisherman, sagely, "how was he held in place on the bear's back?"

"That is what I can't understand. At all events, it will be the bear's last feast. As I entered the village I notified six stout fellows, and to-morrow, sister Maase, I will bring you the handsomest white skin that ever ran over the mountain snows."

"Take care, brother," said the woman; "that was a strange thing that you saw. That bear may be the devil."

"Are you crazy?" laughed the mountaineer; "the devil changed into a bear! Into a cat, if you please,

or a monkey, — that has been known to happen ; but into a bear ! By St. Eldon the Exorcist, your superstition would make a baby or an old woman blush for shame ! ”

The poor woman hung her head. •

“ You were my lord and master, brother, before my husband ever cast his eyes upon me ; so do whatever your guardian angel inspires you to do. ”

“ In what direction did you meet the bear, did you say ? ” the fisherman inquired.

“ On the road from Smiasen to Walderhog. ”

“ Walderhog ! ” exclaimed the woman, crossing herself.

“ Walderhog ! ” echoed Ordener.

“ I hope most sincerely that you were not going toward Walderhog, brother, ” said Braal.

“ I ? God forbid ! It was the bear. ”

“ Shall you go there in search of him to-morrow ? ” said Maase, in deadly terror.

“ No, indeed ; how can you believe, my friends, that even a bear would dare to take for his haunt a cavern, where — ”

He stopped, and all three crossed themselves.

“ You are right, ” said Braal ; “ even beasts have an instinct which warns them away from such places. ”

“ My kind hosts, ” said Ordener, “ tell me, I pray you, what there is so terrible about this cave of Walderhog. ”

The other three gazed at one another in blank amazement, as if they could not understand such an inquiry.

"Is n't King Walder's tomb there?" the young man continued.

"Yes," said the woman, — "a stone tomb that sings."

"And that is n't all," said Braal.

"No," she continued, "the bones of the dead have been known to dance there at night."

"And that is n't all," said Kennybol.

With that they were all silent, as if they dared not pursue the subject.

"Well," queried Ordener, "what more of the supernatural is there about it?"

"Young man," said the mountaineer, with portentous gravity, "you should not treat the matter so lightly, when you see an old gray wolf like myself tremble."

"I should be very glad, however, to know about the marvellous things that take place in this cave of Walderhog," rejoined the young man, with a smile; "for that is my destination."

This assertion fairly paralyzed his hearers.

"Walderhog! Just heaven! You are going to Walderhog?"

"And he said it," observed Braal, "as one might say, 'I am going to Lœvig to sell my codfish;' — or, 'I am going to Ralph's Inlet to fish for herring'! To Walderhog! Great God!"

"Unhappy youth!" cried the woman, "were you born without a guardian angel? Have you no patron saint in heaven? Alas! it must be so, since you seem not to know your own name."

"What motive, in God's name, can tempt your

Courtesy to visit that horrible place?" interposed the mountaineer.

"I have a demand to make upon a certain person," Ordener replied.

"Listen, Herr Stranger; you seem not to be very well acquainted with this region; your Courtesy must be mistaken; you can't mean to go to Walderhog."

"Furthermore," said the mountaineer, "if it's any human being that you want to speak to, you will find none there."

"Except the demon," suggested Maase.

"The demon! what demon?"

"Why, the one for whom the tomb sings and the dead dance."

"Is it possible you do not know," said the fisherman, drawing nearer to Ordener and lowering his voice, "that the cave of Walderhog is the home of —"

His wife stopped him.

"My lord and master, do not say that name; it brings ill luck."

"The home of whom?" asked Ordener.

"Of an incarnate devil," said Kennybol.

"Upon my word, my excellent hosts, I am at a loss to know what you mean. I was told that the cave of Walderhog was occupied by Hans of Iceland."

A frightened cry arose from the three throats at once.

"What! — you know him! He is the demon!"

The woman pulled her cotton cap over her eyes, protesting by all the saints that it was not she who pronounced that name.

When Braal had recovered somewhat from his stupefaction, he gazed earnestly at Ordener as if there were something about the young man that he could not comprehend.

“I hoped, Herr Traveller, that even if I should live to a greater age than my father, who died at a hundred and twenty, I should never have occasion to point out the road to Walderhog to a human being, endowed with reason and believing in God.”

“Of course,” cried Maase, “and his Courtesy won’t go to the accursed place; in order to set his foot inside it, he would have to consent to make a bargain with the devil.”

“I shall go, my good friends; and the greatest service you can do me will be to show me the shortest way.”

“The shortest way to go where you want to go,” said Braal, “would be to jump from the top of the nearest cliff into the nearest stream.”

“Is there no difference, pray,” said Ordener, calmly, “between seeking death to no purpose, and incurring a danger which may have most important results?”

Braal shook his head, while his brother gazed curiously at the adventurous young man.

“I understand,” cried the fisherman, suddenly; “you mean to secure the thousand royal crowns offered by the chief syndic for the head of this Icelandic demon.”

Ordener smiled.

“My young sir,” continued the fisherman, feelingly, “take my advice, and abandon your purpose. I am old and poor, but I would not give what time I have

still to live for your thousand crowns, if it was only a single day."

The imploring, compassionate eye of the good wife watched eagerly to see what impression her husband's counsel produced upon their young guest.

Ordener hastened to reply : —

"I have a far deeper interest in seeking out this brigand whom you call a demon ; it is for others —"

The mountaineer, who had not taken his eyes from Ordener's face, interrupted him.

"I understand you now," he said ; "I know why you seek the demon Iclander."

"I propose to force him to fight," said the young man.

"You are intrusted with an important mission, are you not?" said Kennybol.

"I have just said as much."

The mountaineer walked up to the young man, with a knowing expression, and Ordener, with the utmost astonishment, heard his voice whispering in his ear : —

"Your interest is for Count Schumacker von Griffenfeld, is n't it?"

"My good man," he ejaculated, "how do you know?"

In very truth it was hard to understand how a Norwegian mountaineer could know a secret which he had intrusted to no one, not even General Levin.

Kennybol continued in the same mysterious tone : "I wish you all success ; you are a noble youth thus to take the part of the oppressed."

Ordener's amazement was so great that he could

hardly find words to ask the mountaineer how he came to know the object of his journey.

“Silence !” said Kennybol, with his finger on his lips ; “ I hope you will obtain what you desire from the tenant of Walderhog ; my arm, like your own, is devoted to the service of the prisoner of Munckholm.”

With that he raised his voice, and went on, before Ordener could reply : —

“ Brother, and you, good sister Maase, receive this worthy youth as another brother. Come ! I believe that supper is ready.”

“ What !” said Maase, “ have you persuaded his Courtesy to abandon his purpose of visiting the demon ? ”

“ Pray that no harm may come to him, sister. He is a noble and excellent youth. Come, my gallant sir, take food and rest with us. To-morrow I will show you your road, and we will go together, — you to seek your devil, and I to seek my bear.”

XXIX.

Comrade, oh ! comrade, from what comrade didst thou spring, — from what child of man didst thou spring, to dare thus to attack Fafnir ? — *Edda*.

THE first rays of the rising sun were just tingeing with a ruddy glow the highest point of the cliffs along the coast, when a fisherman, who had cast his nets before dawn a few musket-shots from the shore, opposite the mouth of the cave of Walderhog, saw a figure, enveloped in a cloak, or a winding sheet, clamber down the rocks, and disappear within the arched opening of the redoubtable cavern. Terror-stricken, he commended his skiff and his soul to St. Usuph, and rowed quickly home to tell his frightened family that he had seen one of the ghosts which dwelt in Hans of Iceland's palace returning home at daybreak.

This ghost, which furnished a subject for conversation during the long winter evenings, and a means of frightening many a naughty child into obedience, was Ordener, the noble-hearted son of the Viceroy of Norway, who, alone and unknown, was risking his life for her to whom he had given his heart and his future, the daughter of a proscribed and disgraced man, while the two kingdoms supposed that he was playing the devoted lover by the side of his haughty fiancée.

Gloomy forebodings and predictions attended this stage of his journey. When he took his leave of the fisherman's family kind-hearted Maase knelt in prayer in front of her door. The mountaineer Kennybol and his six comrades, who had pointed out the road to him, parted from him half a mile from Walderhog, and these intrepid hunters, who set out in pursuit of a huge bear with light hearts and laughing lips, stood for a long while with terror written on every feature, gazing after the venturesome youth as he strode away toward his destination.

Ordener entered the cave of Walderhog, as one enters a haven which one has longed to reach. He felt a thrill of divine joy as he thought that the object of his life was near its accomplishment, and that in a few moments he would perhaps have poured out all his blood for his Ethel. He was on the point of attacking a brigand who was dreaded throughout the whole province, — a monster, a demon perhaps ; and yet that horrific figure did not appear to his imagination at all ; he saw only the sweet face of the captive maiden, who was doubtless praying for him in her prison. If he had embarked in the undertaking for any other than her, he might have thought for a moment, simply long enough to despise it, of the peril which he had come so far to seek ; but does reflection ever find a resting-place in a youthful heart when it is doubly exalted by a noble, manly love, and a self-sacrificing devotion ?

He walked on with head erect under the vaulted roof, whose thousand echoes magnified the noise of his footsteps, without so much as a glance at the

century-old stalactites and basaltic forms which hung down above his head amid the moss and lichens, — a motley assemblage of strange shapes, which the superstitious credulity of the Norwegian clodhoppers had often transformed into crowds of demons, or processions of ghosts.

He passed with like indifference the tomb of King Walder, with which so many dismal traditions were connected; and he heard no other voice than the prolonged whistling of the north wind in the gloomy gallery.

He kept on through winding passages, dimly lighted by clefts in the rock, half choked with grass and heather. His feet were continually striking against objects which gave forth a hollow sound as they rolled away, and seemed to his eyes in the half light to have the appearance of broken skulls, or long rows of white teeth laid bare to their roots.

But no feeling of terror assailed his heart. His only feeling was one of surprise at his failure to encounter the occupant of the horrible place.

At last he reached a sort of circular hall, hollowed out by the processes of nature in the side of the rock. There the subterranean path which he had followed came to an end, and the only openings in the walls of the hall were wide fissures, through which a glimpse could be obtained of the woods and mountains without.

Surprised to have made the tour of the cavern without result, he began to despair of falling in with the brigand. A structure of peculiar shape in the centre of the hall attracted his attention. Three long,

massive blocks of stone, standing on end, supported a fourth, which was of great size and square, like three columns holding up a roof. Under this gigantic tripod, if we may so term it, was a sort of altar, also formed of a single block of granite, and with a circular, bowl-shaped depression on its upper face. Ordener recognized it as one of those colossal Druidical structures which he had often met with on his travels in Norway, and of which the most marvellous examples in France are the tombs of Lokmariaker and Carnac. Curious structures they are ; erected on the surface of the ground, as tents are, as if but for a day, their weight alone has fixed them there for all time.

The young man, lost in thought, leaned mechanically against the altar, the edges of which were dyed brown, — so often and so deep had it drunk of the blood of human victims !

Suddenly he started ; a voice, which seemed to come from the very stone, fell upon his ear.

“ Young man,” it said, “ the feet which brought you to this place are close to the brink of the grave.”

He hastily stood erect, and put his hand to his sword, while an echo, feeble as the voice of a dying man, repeated distinctly in the depths of the cave :

“ Young man, the feet which brought you to this place are close to the brink of the grave.”

At that moment a frightful face rose on the other side of the altar, — a face surrounded by red hair, and whose lips were parted in a fiendish smile.

“ Young man,” he said again, “ you have come to this place upon feet which are close to the brink of the grave.”

"And with a hand which is close to my sword," replied Ordener, coolly.

The monster came out from behind the altar and revealed his thick-set, active figure, his savage, blood-stained garments, his crooked hands, and his heavy axe of stone.

"Here am I," he said, with a growl like a wild beast's.

"And here am I," retorted Ordener.

"I expected you."

"I did more than that," returned the dauntless youth ; "I sought you out."

The brigand folded his arms.

"Do you know who I am?"

"Yes."

"And you are not afraid?"

"Not now."

"You were afraid, then, on your way here?" and the monster nodded his head triumphantly.

"Only that I should not find you."

"You defy me, and your feet have been stumbling against human bones."

"To-morrow perhaps they may stumble against yours."

The little man trembled with rage, while Ordener, quite unmoved, maintained his calm, proud attitude.

"Beware!" muttered the outlaw ; "I shall fall upon you like Norway hailstones upon a parasol."

"I would care for no other protection than a parasol against you."

It was as if there were something in Ordener's look which cowed the monster. He began to tear the

hair out of his cloak with his nails, as a tiger tears up the grass before pouncing upon his prey.

"You are teaching me what pity is," he said.

"And you are teaching me what contempt is."

"Child, your voice is soft, your cheeks are fresh and rosy, like the voice and the cheeks of a girl; what death do you seek at my hands?"

"I seek your death."

The little man laughed.

"You do not know that I am a demon, that the spirit that lives in me is the spirit of Ingolphus the Exterminator."

"I know that you are a brigand, and that you murder for money."

"You are mistaken," the monster interposed; "it is for blood."

"Were you not paid by the Von Ahlefelds to murder Captain Dispolsen?"

"What's that you say? What names are those?"

"Do you not know Captain Dispolsen, whom you murdered on the beach at Urchtal?"

"Perhaps I did; but I have forgotten him, as I shall have forgotten you three days hence."

"Do you not know Count von Ahlefeld, who paid you for taking an iron casket from the captain?"

"Von Ahlefeld? Wait! yes, I know him. I drank his son's blood yesterday in my own son's skull."

Ordener shuddered with horror.

"Were you not content with your wages?"

"What wages?" demanded the brigand.

"Listen: the sight of you is repulsive to me; we

must make an end of this. A week ago you stole an iron casket from one of your victims, an officer from Munckholm."

The last word made the outlaw start.

"An officer from Munckholm," he growled between his teeth. "Do you happen to be an officer from Munckholm, also?" he continued.

"No," said Ordener.

"So much the worse!" and the brigand's face grew dark.

"Listen to me again," Ordener persisted: "where is the casket you stole from the captain?"

The little man seemed to reflect for an instant.

"By Ingolphus! this cursed iron box seems to engross a good many minds. I promise you that there will be less search for the one that contains your bones, if they are ever got together in a box."

These words, which proved to Ordener that the brigand knew of the casket he mentioned, revived his hope of obtaining possession of it.

"Tell me what you did with the casket. Is it in Count von Ahlefeld's hands?"

"No."

"You lie, for you are laughing."

"Believe what you choose. What does it matter to me?"

The monster had adopted a tone of raillery which aroused Ordener's suspicion. He saw that there was nothing for him to do except work him into a frenzy, or intimidate him, if that were possible.

"Understand," he exclaimed, raising his voice, "that you must give me that casket."

The other replied with a savage, sneering laugh.

"You must give it me," the young man repeated in a voice of thunder.

"Are you in the habit of giving orders to buffaloes and bears?" retorted the monster, with the same hideous laugh.

"I would give that order to the devil in hell."

"You will be in a position to do just that very soon."

Ordener drew his sword, which flashed in the darkness like lightning.

"Obey me!"

"Look you," rejoined the other, waving his axe; "I had it in my power to crush your bones and suck your blood when you were coming hither, but I restrained myself; I was curious to see the thoroughbred sparrow attack the vulture."

"Villain!" shouted Ordener, "defend yourself."

"It's the first time that was ever said to me," muttered the outlaw, grinding his teeth.

As he spoke he leaped upon the stone altar, and gathered himself for a spring, like the leopard who awaits the hunter at the top of a cliff, to pounce upon him when he least expects it.

From that vantage point he fixed his glaring eyes upon his opponent, as if deliberating on which side he could most effectively attack him. It was all over with gallant Ordener if he delayed an instant, but he did not give the brigand time to reflect; he rushed impetuously upon him, aiming a blow at his face with his sword.

Thereupon ensued the most terrible combat that

the imagination of man can conceive. The little man, standing upon the altar like a statue on its pedestal, resembled one of the ghastly idols to which, in the days of barbarism, unholy sacrifices and sacrilegious gifts were offered on the same spot.

His movements were so swift that on whatever side Ordener assailed him he was always confronted by the monster's face and the sharp edge of his axe. He would have been hacked to pieces at the first onset, had he not happily been inspired to wrap his cloak around his left arm, so that most of his frantic opponent's blows spent their force upon that yielding buckler. Thus for several moments they wasted their strength in inconceivable efforts to wound each other. The outlaw's bloodshot gray eyes were starting from their sockets ; dumfounded to encounter such a vigorous and bold resistance from an adversary whose exterior gave little indication of such prowess, his savage sneers gave place to sombre fury. The ghastly immobility of the monster's features, and the intrepid tranquillity of Ordener's, formed a strange contrast to their lightning-like movements, offensive and defensive.

Naught could be heard save the clashing of weapons, the hurried steps of the younger man, and the labored breathing of both. Suddenly the outlaw roared with anger. The head of his axe was caught in the folds of the cloak. He straightened himself up, shook his arm furiously, but succeeded only in involving the helve with the head in the clinging stuff, which twisted more firmly around it with every fresh effort that he made.

The redoubtable outlaw watched the young man's sword coming straight for his breast.

"Once more I ask you," said Ordener, triumphantly; "will you give me the iron casket which you basely stole?"

The little man was silent for a moment; then he answered, in the midst of a roar: —

"No, and be damned to you!"

"Reflect!" said Ordener, without relaxing his victorious, threatening attitude.

"No! I told you no!" the brigand repeated.

The noble-hearted youth lowered his sword.

"Very well," he said, "disentangle your axe from the folds of my cloak, so that we may go on."

A disdainful laugh was the monster's reply.

"So you play the generous victor, boy; as if I needed it!"

Before Ordener, taken by surprise, could turn his head, Hans placed his foot on his loyal adversary's shoulder, and with one bound landed twelve paces away from him. With another bound he was upon him. He clung to him, body to body, as the panther clings with claws and teeth to the sides of the mighty lion. His nails were buried in the young man's shoulders, his bony knees pressed hard against his hips, and Ordener saw, within an inch of his own eyes, the ghastly, revolting face with its bloody mouth and wild beast's teeth, ready to tear him asunder. He spoke no more; no intelligible word escaped from his throbbing throat; but his rage found vent in a hoarse bellowing, relieved by discordant cries. He was more hideous than the most

ferocious beast, more appalling than a demon ; he was a man in whom there was nothing human.

Ordener tottered under the outlaw's sudden onslaught, and would have fallen, had not one of the massive pillars of the Druidical monument been at his back to support him. He was in a half-recumbent position, with his shoulders against the pillar, gasping under the weight of his terrible foe. Consider that this whole transaction took place in less time than is required to imagine it, and some idea can be formed of the frightful character of the struggle.

As we said, the gallant youth tottered, but he did not tremble. He thought of Ethel, and said farewell to her in his heart. The thought of his love was like a prayer, and restored his strength. He threw his arms around the monster, seized his sword-blade in the middle, and brought the point down with all his strength upon his back. The outlaw gave a blood-curdling screech, and with a backward leap, which nearly overturned Ordener, he extricated himself from his arms, and fell to the ground a few steps away, carrying in his teeth a fragment of green cloth which he had torn out in his frenzy.

He sprang to his feet, supple and active as a young chamois, and the combat began again, for the third time, more desperately than ever. There happened to be, near the spot where he fell, a pile of huge blocks of stone, among which the moss and briers had been peaceably growing for centuries. Two men of ordinary strength would have found it difficult to raise the smallest of these masses. The

outlaw seized one of them in both hands, and lifted it above his head, preparatory to hurling it at Ordener. His expression at that moment was frightful beyond description. The huge mass hurtled heavily through the air, and the young man had just time to step aside. It crashed against the wall of the cavern with a thunderous noise which the echoes tossed back and forth for many seconds.

Ordener had hardly time to recover his self-possession before a second block of stone was waving threateningly above the outlaw's head. Incensed at being made a target of in this cowardly way, he rushed at the little man with uplifted sword, determined to change the nature of the contest; but the formidable missive shot from the outlaw's hands like a thunderbolt, and on its passage through the heavy, murky atmosphere of the cavern, came in contact with the slender bare blade, and snapped it off, as if it were made of glass. Ordener was disarmed, and the monster's discordant laughter filled the air.

"Have you anything to say to God or the devil before you die?" he cried.

His eyes shot fire, all his muscles were tense with rage and delight, and he pounced impatiently upon his axe, which lay on the ground still caught in the folds of the cloak.

Poor Ethel!

Suddenly there came a sound of distant roaring without the cave. The monster stood still and listened; louder and louder rose the uproar, — the shouting of men, mingled with the plaintive growling of a bear. Still the brigand listened, and still

the cries of pain continued. He seized his axe and rushed, not upon Ordener, but toward one of the fissures to which we referred, through which the daylight filtered into the cave.

Ordener, amazed beyond measure to be thus forgotten, followed him toward this natural doorway, and saw, in a clearing close at hand, a huge white bear, brought to bay by seven hunters, among whom he fancied that he could distinguish Kennybol, whose words made such an impression upon him the night before.

He looked around. The outlaw was no longer in the cave, and he heard without an appalling voice, crying : —

“ Friend ! Friend ! I am coming ; here I am ! ”

XXX.

Pierre, the dear child, has lost everything at dice. — *Regnier.*

THE regiment of arquebusiers from Munckholm was marching through the mountain defiles between Drontheim and Skongen. Sometimes their path lay along the course of a foaming torrent, and the long line of bayonets would seem to be creeping through the ravines like a huge serpent, whose scales sparkle in the sunlight; again they might be seen winding up and around a mountain, like the bronze battalions which are so often represented in relief ascending triumphal columns.

The troops were marching along with a discontented, listless manner, for the gallant fellows were fond of nothing except actual fighting or repose. The vulgar, time-worn jokes, which delighted them only the day before, had lost their power to evoke a smile. The air was nipping, and the sky overcast; to cause even a ripple of laughter in the ranks it was necessary at the very least that a cantinière should have a fall from the back of her little nag, or a tin sauce-pan go leaping down from rock to rock to the bottom of a precipice.

Seeking momentary relief from the ennui of the march, Lieutenant Randmer, a young Danish nobleman, approached Captain Lory, a soldier of fortune.

The captain was trudging along at a slow, but steady gait; the lieutenant, who was very light and quick in his movements, was cutting the air with a switch which he plucked in the underbrush along the road.

“Well, captain, what’s the matter? you seem downhearted.”

“I should say that I have reason to be,” the old fellow replied, without raising his head.

“Come, come! no moping. Look at me, — am I downhearted? And yet I’ll bet that I have at least as much reason to be so as you have.”

“I doubt it, Baron Randmer; I have lost my only possession; I have lost all my wealth.”

“Captain Lory, we are in precisely the same fix. It is n’t a fortnight since Lieutenant Alberick won from me at one stroke my ancestral estate of Randmer, and all its appurtenances. I am ruined; but am I the less light-hearted for that?”

“Lieutenant,” the captain replied, gloomily, “you have lost nothing but your fine estate, while I have lost my dog.”

At that reply the younger man’s insipid face seemed to hesitate between laughter and emotion.

“Take heart, captain,” he said. “See! I, who have lost my castle — ”

“What does that amount to?” the other broke in. “Besides, you will soon win another castle.”

“And you will get another dog.”

The old man shook his head.

“I may get another dog; but I shall never get my poor Drake back again.”

He said no more; for tears filled his eyes, and

rolled silently down over his harsh, weather-beaten cheeks.

"I never loved any one but him," he went on after a brief pause. "I never knew my father or my mother; God give them peace, and my poor Drake, too! Lieutenant Randmer, he saved my life in the Pomeranian war; I called him Drake in compliment to the famous admiral. Good old Drake! his love for me never changed with my fortunes. After the battle of Oholfen, General Schack, the great General Schack, patted him on the head, and said to me: —

"'You have a fine dog, Sergeant Lory!' for I was only a sergeant then."

"Deuce take me!" interjected the lieutenant, waving his switch, "it must seem strange to be only a sergeant."

The old soldier of fortune did not hear him; he seemed to be speaking to himself, and the words which escaped him were well-nigh inaudible: —

"Poor Drake! to have come out of so many breaches and trenches safe and sound, to be drowned at last, like a cat, in that accursed Drontheim Fiord! My poor dog! my dear friend! you deserved to die by my side on the battle-field."

"My gallant captain," cried the lieutenant, "how can you continue low-spirited? We may perhaps fight to-morrow."

"Yes," exclaimed the old captain, contemptuously, "against worthy foes!"

"What! those brigands the miners! those devils of mountaineers!"

"Stone-cutters and highwaymen! — fellows who

don't even know how to draw up in the pork's-head formation, or in Gustavus Adolphus's wedge ! Fine riff-raff that to put face-to-face with a man like me, who has fought through all the wars in Pomerania, and made the campaigns of Scania and Dalecarlia ! who has served under the glorious General Schack, and the gallant Count von Guldenlew ! ”

“ But have n't you heard that these same fellows have a redoubtable leader, a giant, as powerful and savage as Goliath, a brigand who drinks nothing but human blood, a fiend, who is a whole Satan in himself ? ”

“ Who is it, pray ? ”

“ Why, the renowned Hans of Iceland ! ”

“ Bah ! I'll bet that this mighty general can't cock a musket in four movements, or load an imperial carbine ! ”

Randmer roared with laughter.

“ Oh ! yes, laugh away,” continued the captain. “ It will be very amusing, no doubt, to cross good swords with vile mattocks, and noble pikes with dung-forks ! Worthy foes indeed ! my good Drake would have been ashamed to snap at their legs ! ”

The captain was thus indulging his contemptuous indignation, when he was interrupted by the arrival of an officer who rushed breathlessly up to them.

“ Captain Lory ! my dear Randmer ! ”

“ What is it ? ” they exclaimed with one voice.

“ My friends, I am frozen with horror ! Von Ahlefeld ! Lieutenant von Ahlefeld, the grand chancellor's son ! You know, my dear Baron Randmer, — Frederic — the exquisite — the fop — ”

"Yes," the baron replied, "a great dandy! But my disguise was more successful than his at the last ball at Charlottenburg. But what has happened to him, pray?"

"I know whom you mean," observed Lory, — "Frederic von Ahlefeld, lieutenant in the third company, which has blue lapels. He's very careless about his duty."

"You won't have to complain of him any more, Captain Lory."

"How so?" said Randmer.

"He is in garrison at Wahlstrom," continued the old captain, coldly.

"Exactly," returned the other. "The colonel just received a messenger. Poor Frederic!"

"What in Heaven's name is the matter, Captain Bollar? You frighten me."

"Pshaw!" continued old Lory; "our dandy was missing at roll-call, I suppose, as he usually is, and the captain has sent the grand chancellor's son to the guard-house; that's what has upset you so, I'm sure."

Bollar put his hand on the old man's shoulder.

"Captain Lory," he said, "Lieutenant von Ahlefeld has been eaten alive!"

The two captains gazed into each other's faces, while Randmer, who was taken aback for a moment, suddenly began to laugh uproariously.

"Ha, ha! very good, very good, Captain Bollar! You must have your little joke; but you can't fool me, I promise you."

With that the lieutenant folded his arms, and

gave full play to his hilarity, declaring that what pleased him most was the innocent way in which Lory swallowed Bollar's amusing fables. It really was a diverting idea, he said, most diverting, that Frederic, who was so ridiculously particular about his skin, had been eaten raw.

"Randmer," said Bollar, gravely, "you are an idiot. I tell you that Von Ahlefeld is dead. I have it from the colonel himself—dead!"

"Oh! but he plays his part well!" rejoined the baron, still laughing; "what a droll dog it is!"

Bollar shrugged his shoulders, and turned to old Lory, who began coolly to question him as to the details.

"Yes, Captain Bollar," said he of the inextinguishable laugh, "do tell us who ate the poor devil. Did he grace the breakfast-table of a wolf, or did a bear sup upon his carcass?"

"The colonel," said Bollar, "just received a despatch, informing him in the first place that the garrison of Wahlstrom is falling back toward us before a considerable body of the insurgents."

Old Lory knit his brow.

"In the second place," continued Bollar, "that Lieutenant Frederic von Ahlefeld, who went out to hunt in the mountains near the ruins of Arbar, three days since, fell in with a monster, who carried him into his cave and devoured him."

At that Lieutenant Randmer's hilarity redoubled.

"Oho! how old Lory does swallow these fairy tales! That's right, my dear Bollar, keep your face

straight. You are doing it admirably. But you don't tell us who this monster is, this ogre, this vampire, who carried the lieutenant off and ate him like a six-days-old fawn."

"I won't tell you," muttered Bollar, testily; "but I will tell Lory, who is not so absurdly sceptical. My dear Lory, the monster who drank Frederic's blood was Hans of Iceland."

"The leader of the brigands!" cried the old officer.

"Well, well, my brave Lory," said Randmer the incorrigible, "does one need to know the imperial drill, when one can make such good play with his jaws?"

"Baron Randmer," said Bollar, "your character is much the same as Von Ahlefeld's; take care that you do not meet the same fate."

"I say again," cried the young man, "that the imperturbable gravity of Captain Bollar is the most amusing part of the whole thing to me."

"And I say," retorted Bollar, "that the never-failing gayety of Lieutenant Randmer is the most ominous part of it to me."

At that moment a group of officers, talking earnestly together, approached our three friends.

"Gad!" cried Randmer, "I must tell them of Bollar's fable. Look you, comrades," he added, walking to meet them, "do you know that poor Frederic von Ahlefeld has been eaten alive by that villanous Hans of Iceland?"

As he finished he gave vent to his amusement in a burst of laughter, which was received by the

new arrivals with something very like shouts of indignation.

"What! you laugh! I would never have believed that Randmer would repeat such news in such a tone. To laugh at such a calamity!"

"What!" said Randmer, beginning to be disturbed; "can it be true?"

"Why, you just repeated it yourself!" came from all sides. "Don't you believe your own words?"

"But I thought it was a joke of Bollar's."

"It would have been a decidedly unseemly joke," observed an elderly officer; "but unfortunately it is no joke at all. Colonel Voethaün has just received the awful news."

"What a fearful thing! it's absolutely appalling!" exclaimed a multitude of voices.

"It seems that we are going to fight wolves and bears with human faces," said one.

"We shall be shot at," chimed in another, "without knowing where the shots come from; we shall be killed one by one like pheasants in a bird-cage."

"Von Ahlefeld's death," exclaimed Bollar, solemnly, "makes one shudder. Our regiment is very unfortunate. First came Dispolsen's death, then those of the poor fellows found at Cascadthymore, and now Von Ahlefeld's, — three tragedies within a very short time."

Baron Randmer, who had said nothing since his discomfiture, emerged from his fit of abstraction.

"It's incredible," he exclaimed; "Frederic, who danced so well!"

After giving utterance to that profound reflection

he relapsed into silence, while Captain Lory observed that he was deeply grieved by the young lieutenant's death, and called the attention of the second arquebusier, Toric-Belfast, to the fact that the copper in his cross-belt was not so highly polished as it should be.

XXXI.

"Hush! hush! there's a man coming down from above by a ladder."

.
"Oh, yes; it's a spy."

"Heaven could grant me no greater boon than to enable me to rescue you — my life. I am at your service; but tell me, in Heaven's name, whose army is this?"

"The Count of Barcelona's."

"Which count?"

.
"What is it, pray?"

"General, here is a spy of the enemy."

"Whence come you?"

"I came hither with no idea of what I was likely to find here; I was far from expecting what I see."

LOPE DE VEGA: *La Fuerza Lastimosa*.

THERE is something unspeakably gloomy and desolate in the aspect of a flat, bare landscape, when the sun has set, when one is walking alone over fields of dry stubble to the monotonous song of the cricket, with huge shapeless masses of cloud sinking slowly below the horizon, like phantom corpses.

Such was the impression which intensified the sadness of Ordener's reflections in the evening following his fruitless encounter with Hans of Iceland. Confused for a moment by his sudden disappearance, his first impulse was to follow him; but he lost his way among the heather, and wandered all day

through regions which grew wilder and more barren as he went on, without finding any signs of human life. At nightfall he found himself in a plain of considerable extent, which presented an unbroken horizon, with no promise of shelter to the way-worn, famished traveller.

If only his physical suffering had not been aggravated by the oppression at his heart! but alas! he had reached the end of his journey, and had utterly failed to accomplish his object, and how could his heart not be heavy? Gone were all the fond and delusive hopes which had impelled him to seek the outlaw in his lair; and now that his courage was no longer upheld by those hopes, a thousand discouraging thoughts, which had found no place in his heart the night before, came thronging upon it in a body.

What was he to do? How could he return to Schumacker without the papers which assured Ethel's welfare? What terrible disasters were they which the capture of that fatal casket would have prevented? And his marriage with Ulrica von Ahlefeld! Oh! if he could but rescue his Ethel from that wretched prison; if he could fly with her, and bear his happiness away with him to exile in some distant land!

He wrapped himself in his cloak, and lay down on the ground. The sky was black as ink; a flash broke now and again through the clouds which overhung the earth like a funeral pall, only to vanish instantly; a cold wind blew across the plain. The young man hardly gave a thought to these indications that a violent storm was imminent; and even if he could have found shelter from the storm, and rest from

his weariness, where could he find shelter from his unhappiness, and rest from his thoughts?

Suddenly a confused murmur of men's voices reached his ears. He raised himself upon his elbow, and saw figures moving in the darkness a short distance away. He gazed with the utmost intentness; a light was burning in the midst of the mysterious group, and Ordener, whose amazement can easily be imagined, watched the shadowy figures plunge one after another into the bowels of the earth, until all had disappeared.

Ordener was entirely above the superstitions of his time and country. His thoughtful and mature mind rose superior to the ignorant credulity and inexplicable terror which render miserable the infancy of nations no less than the infancy of men. There was, however, in this strange apparition something supernatural, which aroused in him some distrust of his own reasoning powers; for no one can say that the spirits of the dead do not sometimes revisit the earth.

He rose, crossed himself, and directed his steps toward the place where the figures had disappeared. Great drops of rain were beginning to fall; his cloak filled out like a sail, and the wind beat the feather in his cap against his face.

Suddenly he stopped. A flash of lightning disclosed a large, round hole, in shape like a well, into which he would surely have plunged head-foremost but for the opportune glare. He drew near the hole. A dim light was shining therein at a frightful depth, and imparted a reddish tinge to the lower portion of this immense cylinder, hollowed out of the bowels of the

earth. This feeble ray, which seemed to come from a magic fire kept alight by elves, served to increase the immeasurable extent of the region of darkness which the eye was compelled to traverse in order to reach it.

The fearless youth leaned over the orifice and listened. The distant murmur of voices reached his ear. He no longer doubted that the beings who had so mysteriously appeared and disappeared before his eyes, went down into this pit, and he felt an invincible desire, doubtless because it was so written in his destiny, to go down after them, even though he were following spectres into one of the mouths of hell. Furthermore the storm was beginning to rage furiously, and the pit would afford him some protection against it.

But how was he to go down? What means did they adopt whom he intended to follow, assuming that they were not phantoms? A second flash came to his assistance, and showed him right at his feet the upper end of a ladder, which extended down into the depths of the well. It was a stout, perpendicular timber, with short iron bars running through it at regular intervals, for the feet and hands of those who dared to trust themselves to its support.

Ordener did not hesitate. He boldly swung himself out on the ladder, and plunged into the pit, without any knowledge whether it reached to the bottom, and without stopping to reflect that he might never see the sunlight again. Soon he could not distinguish the sky above his head, save by the bluish glare which frequently illuminated it. Soon the

pouring rain, which was deluging the surface, reached him only in the shape of fine, vapory dew. Soon the boisterous wind which was raging so furiously about the mouth of the well died away above his head in a prolonged whistle. He went down and down, and hardly seemed to approach the subterranean light. He kept on, however, without losing courage, carefully avoiding the temptation to look down, lest he should be giddy and fall to the bottom.

At last the increasing heaviness of the air, the greater distinctness with which the voices reached his ear, and the purple reflection which began to be noticeable on the circular walls of the pit, warned him that he was not far from the bottom. He went down a few more rungs of the ladder, and could then see distinctly, at its foot, the entrance to a subterranean passage or cave, lighted by a flickering, reddish light, while his ear was caught by words which at once engrossed his whole attention.

“Will Kennybol never come?” said a voice in an impatient tone.

“What can keep him?” added the same voice after a moment’s pause.

“We have no idea, Herr Hacket,” some one replied.

“He was to pass the night at Surb, with his sister Maase Braal,” another voice observed.

“You see,” said the first speaker, “that I keep all my agreements. I agreed to bring you Hans of Iceland for your leader, and I have brought him.”

A murmur, of which it was difficult to guess the meaning, followed these last words. Ordener’s curi-

osity, already aroused by the name of Kennybol, who gave him such a surprise the night before, was increased tenfold by the mention of Hans of Iceland.

The same voice went on : —

“Jonas, Norbith, my friends, what does it matter after all if Kennybol is behindhand? There are so many of us now that we need have no fear; did you find your banners in the ruins of Crag?”

“Yes, Herr Hacket,” several voices replied.

“Very well; let us raise our standard, then; it is time. Here is money! here is your invincible leader! Courage! On to the rescue of the noble Schumacker, the unfortunate Count von Griffenfeld!”

“Long live Schumacker! long live Schumacker!” many voices cried in chorus, and the name of Schumacker was taken up and repeated by echo after echo in the recesses of the cavern.

Ordener listened with interest that kept pace with his amazement, hardly daring to breathe. He could neither believe nor understand what he heard. Schumacker in league with Kennybol, and with Hans of Iceland! What was this obscure drama, of which he, an unsuspected spectator, was witnessing a scene? Whose life were they banded together to defend? Whose head was at stake?

“Listen!” — it was the same voice again — “in me you see the friend and confidant of the noble Count von Griffenfeld.”

It was a voice which Ordener had never heard before that night.

“Give me your confidence,” it continued, “as he gives me his. Friends, everything works in your

favor ; you will reach Drontheim without meeting an enemy."

"Herr Hacket, let us march at once," said a voice. "Peters told me that he saw the whole Munckholm regiment in the pass, marching against us."

"He deceived you," replied the other, with conviction. "The government is still in ignorance of your revolt, and their sense of security is so entirely undisturbed that the man who rejected your petition, your oppressor, and the oppressor of the illustrious Schumacker, General Levin von Knud, has left Drontheim for the capital to attend the festivities attendant upon the marriage of his ward, Ordener Guldenlew, with Ulrica von Ahlefeld."

Fancy Ordener's emotion. In that wild and deserted region, down in the bowels of the earth, to hear the names of all those in whom he was most deeply interested, himself included, bandied about by perfect strangers ! An appalling doubt arose in his heart. Could it be true ? Was this man whose voice he heard for the first time really an agent of Count von Griffenfeld ? What ! Schumacker, the venerable Schumacker, the noble father of his noble Ethel, revolt against the king, his liege lord, hire a mob of brigands, and kindle civil war ! And it was for that hypocrite, that rebel, that he, the son of the Viceroy of Norway, and the ward of General Levin, had compromised his own future and risked his life ! It was for him that he had sought out and fought the outlawed Icelanders, with whom Schumacker seemed to be in communication, as he had placed him at the head of his mercenaries ! Who could say, indeed, that the

very casket to recover which he, Ordener, nearly laid down his life, did not contain some of the wretched secrets of this hateful scheme? Or might it not be that the revengeful prisoner of Munckholm had made a fool of him? Perhaps he had discovered his name; perhaps, and how the thought tore his generous heart! perhaps his only purpose, in urging him to undertake this fatal journey, was to compass the destruction of the son of his enemy.

Alas! when one has long venerated and loved the name of an unfortunate man; when in one's secret thoughts one has sworn to stand faithfully by him in his adversity, — it is a very bitter moment when one receives his recompense in ingratitude, when the enchantment is at an end, and one must needs renounce the pure and satisfying pleasure of self-sacrificing devotion. In an instant one grows old in experience, the saddest of all forms of old age; and the fairest illusions of life, wherein nothing is fair save its illusions, have vanished forever.

Such were the depressing thoughts that jostled one another in Ordener's brain. The noble-hearted youth longed for death at that moment; it seemed to him as if happiness had passed out of his life forever. To be sure, there were certain points in the statements of the self-styled envoy of Griffenfeld which seemed to him to be false and intended to deceive; but as the imposition was practised upon ignorant rustics, Schumacker was the more guilty in his eyes. And this same Schumacker was his Ethel's father!

His agitation was the more violent because these reflections thrust themselves upon him all at once.

He trembled on the bars by which he was holding, but continued to listen. One sometimes awaits with inexplicable impatience and harrowing eagerness the very disasters which one dreads the most.

“Yes,” the envoy’s voice continued; “your leader is the redoubtable Hans of Iceland. Who will dare to resist you? Your cause is the cause of your wives, and your children who are unfairly kept out of their inheritance, and of a noble martyr who has been for twenty years unjustly immured in an infamous prison. Forward, then; Schumacker and liberty await you! Death to the tyrants!”

“Death!” echoed a thousand voices; and the clash of weapons was mingled with the hoarse notes of the hunting-horn in the underground passages.

“Stop!” shouted Ordener. He had descended the rest of the ladder in reckless haste, for the thought of saving Schumacker from the commission of a crime, and averting the woes of civil war from his country, had taken possession of his whole being with irresistible force. But just as he made his appearance at the entrance of the cavern, the fear that imprudent declamation might bring destruction upon Ethel’s father, and perhaps upon Ethel herself, caused him to forget every other sentiment; and he stood there gazing in wonder at the strange picture presented to his view.

It was like an immense public square of an underground town, assuming the buildings surrounding it to be concealed behind the innumerable pillars which upheld the arches. These pillars sparkled like pilasters of crystal in the rays of a thousand torches car-

ried by a multitude of men, who were armed with an extraordinary diversity of weapons, and scattered confusedly about over the vast space. Seeing the myriad points of light and the ghostly shapes wandering hither and thither in the darkness, one would have said that it was one of the fabulous assemblages of which the old chronicles speak, of sorcerers and demons who carried stars for lamps, and at night illuminated the hoary forests and crumbling castles.

A terrific shout arose from the occupants of the cavern : —

“ A stranger ! Death ! death ! ”

A hundred arms were already uplifted to strike him down. He put his hand to his side in search of his sword. In following his generous impulse the chivalrous youth had entirely forgotten that he was alone and unarmed.

“ Wait, wait ! ” cried a voice which Ordener recognized as belonging to Schumacker’s envoy.

He was a little, stout man, dressed in black, with a bright, but shifty eye.

“ Who are you ? ” he said, walking up to Ordener.

Ordener made no reply. Many hands were laid upon him, and there was not a spot on his breast which was not covered either by the point of a sword or the barrel of a pistol.

“ Are you afraid ? ” asked the little man, with a smile.

“ If your hand was upon my heart, instead of these swords,” Ordener replied coolly, “ you would see that it beats no more quickly than yours, — assuming that you have a heart.”

“Aha!” said the little man; “he puts on airs! Very well, let him die!”

And he turned away.

“Kill me,” said Ordener; “my death is all I care to owe to you.”

“One moment, Herr Hacket,” interposed an old man with a bushy beard who was leaning on a long musket. “You are on my premises, and I alone have the right to send this Christian to tell the dead what he has seen here.”

Herr Hacket began to laugh.

“Faith, my dear Jonas, as you please. It matters little who tries the spy, so long as he is condemned.”

The old man turned to Ordener.

“Come,” said he, “do you, whose desire to know who we are makes you so bold, tell us who you are.”

Ordener said nothing. Surrounded by this motley mob of partisans of Schumacker, for whom he would so gladly have shed his blood, he felt at that moment nothing but an infinite yearning for death.

“His Courtesy prefers not to reply,” said the old man. “When the fox is taken, he ceases to yelp. Kill him.”

“Jonas, my good fellow,” suggested Hacket, “let Hans of Iceland inaugurate his leadership by putting this man out of the way.”

“Yes, yes!” cried many voices in chorus.

Ordener cast his eyes around in great surprise, but still without fear, seeking this Hans of Iceland, with whom he had so valiantly fought for his life that very morning. His amazement redoubled when

he saw a man of colossal stature, dressed in the costume of a mountaineer, coming out of the crowd toward him. This giant glared at Ordener with stupid ferocity, and called for an axe.

"You are not Hans of Iceland," said Ordener, firmly.

"Kill him ! kill him !" cried Hacket, excitedly.

Ordener saw that it was all over with him. He put his hand in his breast to take out the lock of Ethel's hair and kiss it for the last time. The movement caused a paper to drop from his belt to the ground.

"What is that paper ?" said Hacket. "Norbith, see what it is."

Norbith was a young man of swarthy complexion, whose stern features had something noble in their expression. He picked up the paper and unfolded it.

"Great God !" he ejaculated, "it's a safe-conduct from my poor friend Christophorus Nedlam, who was executed on the public square at Skongen less than a week ago, for counterfeiting."

"Well !" said Hacket, in a disappointed tone, as if he had expected important developments. "I hoped it was something of more importance. Look sharp to your work, my dear Hans of Iceland."

Young Norbith took his stand in front of Ordener, and cried : —

"This man is under my protection. My head must fall before a hair of his shall be touched. I will not allow my friend Christophorus Nedlam's safe-conduct to be violated."

Ordener, thus miraculously protected, hung his head in deep humility. He remembered how disdainfully, in his own mind at least, he received the thoughtful kindness of the good chaplain, Athanasius Munder, and his heartfelt prayer, "May the dying man's gift prove a blessing to the traveller!"

"Bah! you are talking nonsense, my dear Norbith," said Hackett. "This man is a spy; he must die."

"Give me my axe," growled the giant.

"He shall not die!" cried Norbith. "What would poor Nedlam's ghost say? — poor Nedlam, who was unjustly hanged! I tell you that he shall not die, for Nedlam does n't choose that he shall."

"Norbith is right, too," said old Jonas. "How can you expect us to put this man to death, Herr Hacket? He has Christophorus Nedlam's safe-conduct."

"But he's a spy, I tell you — a spy," rejoined Hackett.

The old man took his stand beside the younger one in front of Ordener, and they both repeated with portentous gravity: —

"He has the safe-conduct of Christophorus Nedlam, who was hanged at Skongen."

Hackett saw that he must yield, for all the others were beginning to mutter that the stranger must not die, as he had a safe-conduct from Nedlam, the counterfeiter.

"So be it," he said between his teeth, with ill-concealed chagrin; "let him live. After all, it's your affair."

“If he were the devil himself, he should not die,” said Norbith, triumphantly.

Then he turned to Ordener.

“Hark ye,” he said, “you must be a good comrade, or you would not have this pass from my poor friend Nedlam. We are workers in the royal mines. We are in revolt to get rid of the royal guardianship. Herr Hacket says that we are in arms for a certain Count Schumacker, but I do not know him. Stranger, our cause is just. Listen to me, and answer as if I were your patron saint. Will you be one of us?”

A sudden inspiration flashed through Ordener’s brain.

“Yes,” he replied.

Norbith handed him a sword, which he took without speaking.

“Brother,” said the young leader, “if you betray us, you will begin by killing me.”

At this moment a blast of the horn rang out somewhere in the recesses of the mine, and voices in the distance were heard, crying:—

“Here is Kennybol!”

XXXII.

There are thoughts in the brain, which reach up until they touch the skies.— *Spanish Romances.*

THE heart sometimes has sudden inspirations, flashes of vivid light, of which a whole volume of thoughts and reflections can no more adequately express the significance, or sound the depths, than the light of a thousand torches can rival the dazzling glare of the lightning.

And so we will not attempt to analyze the imperious, hidden impulse which led the noble son of the Viceroy of Norway to accept the suggestion of young Norbith, and enroll himself among the bandits who had risen in revolt in behalf of a prisoner of state. It was due in equal measure, in all probability, to a generous desire to go to the bottom of this mysterious affair, at any cost, to a bitter loathing for life, and a reckless indifference concerning the future. Perhaps, too, there was a something of doubt of Schumacker's guilt, inspired by the fact that there was much in his strange surroundings that seemed equivocal and false, as well as by an unrecognized but instinctive perception of the truth, and above all by his deep affection for Ethel. In short, it was a divine inspiration of the advantage which would accrue to Schumacker from having a devoted, clear-sighted friend in the midst of his blind partisans.

XXXIII.

Is yonder man the leader? His very glance terrifies me. I should not dare speak to him. — MATURIN: *Bertram*.

WHEN he heard the shouts which announced the arrival of Kennybol, the famous hunter, Hacket rushed to meet him, leaving Ordener with the other two leaders.

“Here you are at last, my dear Kennybol! Come and let me present you to your redoubtable leader, Hans of Iceland.”

At that name, Kennybol, who was gasping for breath, with pallid cheeks, bristling hair, face bathed in sweat, and hands dripping blood, started back.

“Hans of Iceland!”

“Nonsense!” said Hacket; “have no fear! he is here to second you. You must look upon him as a friend and comrade — nothing else.”

Kennybol did not hear him.

“Hans of Iceland here!” he repeated.

“Why yes!” said Hacket, struggling to suppress a smile; “do you propose to be afraid of him?”

“What!” the hunter began for the third time, “do you mean to tell me that Hans of Iceland is in this mine?”

Hacket turned to the bystanders.

“Is our good Kennybol mad?” he said.

Then he addressed Kennybol again : —

“I see that it was your fear of Hans of Iceland that delayed you.”

Kennybol raised his hand above his head.

“By Etheldera, the martyred saint of Norway, I swear that it was not the fear of Hans of Iceland, but Hans of Iceland himself, that prevented my arriving here sooner !”

These words evoked a murmur of astonishment among the throng of miners and mountaineers who stood around the two speakers, and they brought the same frown to Hacket's brow that the appearance and rescue of Ordener a moment before had done.

“What's that? What do you say?” he asked, lowering his voice.

“I say, Herr Hacket, that but for your cursed Hans of Iceland I should have been here before the first hoot of the owl.”

“Do you mean it? Pray, what did he do to you?”

“Oh! don't ask me; I only hope that my beard may turn as white as the pelt of an ermine, in a single day, if I am ever again in my life (for I believe I am still alive) caught hunting a white bear.”

“Do you mean that you came near being eaten by a bear?”

Kennybol shrugged his shoulders scornfully.

“A bear! — a terrible adversary that! Kennybol eaten by a bear! What do you take me for, Herr Hacket?”

“I beg your pardon,” said Hacket, with a smile.

“If you knew what happened to me, my gallant

sir," said the old hunter, lowering his voice, "you would not keep telling me that Hans of Iceland is here."

Again Hacket seemed disconcerted for a moment. He seized Kennybol's arm, as if he feared that he might go nearer to the spot where the giant's enormous head towered above the heads of the miners.

"My dear Kennybol," he said solemnly, "tell me, I beg, what delayed you. You must see that at this moment the least thing may be of the utmost importance."

"That is true," said Kennybol, after a moment's reflection."

Thereupon he yielded to Hacket's persistent urging and told him that he, with six companions, that very morning pursued a white bear to the neighborhood of the cave of Walderhog, without noticing in the heat of the chase that they were so near that dreaded spot; that the growling of the bear when he was driven to bay summoned to his assistance a little man, armed with an axe of stone, who attacked them with great violence. The appearance of this copy of the devil, who could have been no other than Hans, the demon Iclander, froze them all stiff with terror. At last his six ill-starred comrades fell victims to the two monsters, and Kennybol himself owed his safety to his prompt flight, which was not intercepted, thanks to his fleetness of foot, to the fatigue of Hans of Iceland, and, above all, to the protection of St. Sylvester, the blessed patron of hunters.

"You see, Herr Hacket," he said as he concluded his story, which was made more realistic by the evi-

dent terror of the narrator, and was adorned with all the flowers of rhetoric current among the mountains, "you see that I am not to blame for being late, and that it is impossible that the Iclander, whom I left this morning snarling with his bear over the bodies of my six poor comrades in the heather of Walderhog, can be here now, as our friend, at our rendezvous in Apsyl-Corh mine. I tell you that it cannot be ; I know him now, the fiend incarnate, for I have seen him."

Hacket, who had listened attentively to him throughout, rejoined with perfect seriousness : —

"Kennybol, my good friend, when you are speaking of Hans of Iceland, or of hell, think nothing impossible. I knew all this that you have told me."

An expression of unbounded astonishment, and childlike credulity overspread the harsh features of the old hunter of Kole.

"What ?"

"Yes," pursued Hacket, upon whose face a keener observer might have distinguished a trace of sardonic triumph, "I knew everything, except that you were the hero of this lamentable affair. Hans told me of it on our way hither."

"Really?" said Kennybol; and there was an admixture of fear and respect in the gaze which he fixed upon Hacket, who went on, as coolly as ever :

"Yes, indeed ; but take courage now, and I will present you to this formidable personage."

Kennybol uttered an exclamation of terror.

"Fear nothing, I tell you," continued Hacket. "Look upon him simply as your leader and your

comrade ; but be careful not to remind him of what took place this morning. You understand ? ”

Kennybol was compelled to yield, but it was not without intense repugnance that he consented to be introduced to the demon. They walked up to where Ordener, Jonas, and Norbith were standing.

“ God guard you, my dear Jonas, and Norbith ! ” said Kennybol.

“ We need his protection, Kennybol,” said Jonas.

At that moment Kennybol’s glance met Ordener’s, which was seeking the encounter.

“ Ah ! here you are, my young friend,” he said, rushing eagerly to him, with his hard, wrinkled hand outstretched. “ Welcome ! It would seem that your bold undertaking met with success ? ”

Ordener, who did not understand what the mountaineer seemed to understand so well, was about to seek an explanation, when Norbith exclaimed : —

“ So you know this stranger, Kennybol ? ”

“ Know him ! By my guardian angel, I should say as much ! I love him and esteem him. He is devoted, as we all are, to the good cause we have at heart.”

He cast a second knowing glance at Ordener, who was preparing to reply, when Hacket, who had gone in search of his giant, whom all the bandits seemed to fear and avoid, approached the group, saying : —

“ My gallant hunter Kennybol, behold your leader, the famous Hans of Klipstadur ! ”

Kennybol glanced at the gigantic brigand with more surprise than fear, and put his lips to Hacket’s ear.

“Herr Hacket, the Hans of Iceland whom I left at Walderhog this morning, was a dwarf.”

“You forget, Kennybol, — a demon!” Hacket replied in an undertone.

“True,” said the credulous hunter; “he has changed his shape.”

And he turned away, trembling, to cross himself furtively.

XXXIV.

The mask approaches, — 't is Angelo himself. The rascal knows his trade well ; he must be very sure of his facts. — LESSING.

IN a dark forest of venerable oaks, where the pale light of early morning hardly pierced the gloom, a man of small stature accosted another man, who was alone, and apparently awaiting him. The following conversation was carried on by them in undertones : —

“ I pray your Grace's pardon if I have kept you waiting. Several things conspired to delay me.”

“ What were they ? ”

“ Kennybol, the leader of the mountaineers, did not arrive at the rendezvous until midnight ; and furthermore we were somewhat disturbed by an unexpected witness.”

“ Who was that, pray ? ”

“ A man who dropped down into the mine like a madman, in the very midst of our Sanhedrim. I thought at first that he was a spy, and wished to have him put to death ; but he proved to be provided with a safe-conduct from some worthy much respected by the miners, who has recently been hanged. On reflection, I think he must have been either an inquisitive traveller or some fool of a pedant. At all events, I have taken suitable measures with regard to him.”

“Is everything else going on well?”

“Very well. The miners from Guldbranshal and Fa-roër, led by young Norbith and old Jonas, and the Kole mountaineers, led by Kennybol, should be on the road at this moment. Four miles from Blue-Star, their comrades from Hubfallo and Sund-Moër will join them; the men from Kongsberg and the troop of smiths from Smiasen, who have already driven back the garrison of Wahlstrom, as your Excellency knows, await them a few miles farther on. Lastly, my dear and honored master, all these various parties will camp together to-night two miles from Skongen in the gorges of the Black Pillar.”

“But what sort of a reception did they give your Hans of Iceland?”

“They manifested the most childlike confidence in his identity.”

“Oh! to think that I cannot take vengeance on that monster for the death of my son! . What a calamity that he escaped us!”

“My noble lord, use the name of Hans in the first place to revenge yourself upon Schumacker; later we will consider the means of taking vengeance on Hans himself. The insurgents will march all day to-day, and, as I said, they will halt for the night in the gorge of the Black Pillar two miles from Skongen.”

“What! you would allow so large a body of men to approach so near Skongen? Musdæmon!”

“Suspicion, noble count? Let your Grace deign to send, on the instant, a messenger to Colonel Voethaün, whose regiment should now be at Skongen; inform him that the whole force of the insurgents

will be in camp to-night, unsuspectingly, in the gorge of the Black Pillar, which seems to have been made expressly for ambuscades.

“ I understand you ; but why, my dear fellow, need you have made arrangements to have your rebels turn out in such large numbers ? ”

“ The more formidable the insurrection, my lord, the greater Schumacker’s crime, and your credit. Besides, it is of the utmost importance that it should be crushed out at one blow.”

“ Very good ! but why have them go into camp so near Skongen ? ”

“ Because, in the whole mountain region that is the only spot where it is utterly impossible for them to defend themselves. None will come out of that defile save those who are destined to appear before the tribunal.”

“ Excellently reasoned ! Something tells me, Musdoemon, to bring this affair to a crisis immediately. If the prospects are bright in that direction, they are dark enough in the other. You know we caused search to be made secretly at Copenhagen for the papers which may have fallen into this Dispolsen’s hands ? ”

“ What then, my lord ? ”

“ Why, I have just learned that the marplot had some mysterious relations with that infernal astrologer Cumbysum.”

“ He who died recently ? ”

“ Yes ; and that the old sorcerer when he died handed certain papers to Schumacker’s agent.”

“ Damnation ! there were letters from me, — a complete exposure of our plan.”

“Of *your* plan, Musdœmon.”

“A thousand pardons, noble count! But in that case why did your Grace put yourself in the power of that charlatan Cumbysulsum? — the old traitor!”

“Hark ye, Musdœmon, I am not, as you are, a being entirely without faith in anything. I have had excellent reasons, my dear fellow, for placing confidence in old Cumbysulsum’s knowledge of magic.”

“Would that your Grace had had as much suspicion of his fidelity as confidence in his skill! However, let us not borrow trouble, my noble master. Dispolsen is dead, and his papers are lost; in a few days it will be all over with the only persons to whom they could be of service.”

“In any event, how could any accusation reach me?”

“Or me, under your Grace’s protection?”

“Yes, indeed, my dear fellow, you can certainly rely upon me; but let us hasten the end of it all, I beg you; I will send the messenger to the colonel. Come; my people are awaiting me behind these bushes, and we must get back to Drontheim, which the Mecklemburger must have left by this time. Continue to serve me faithfully, and you can rely upon me in life and in death, despite all the Cumby-sulsums and Dispolsens on earth.

“I pray your Grace to believe — The devil!”

As he spoke, they both plunged into the woods, and their voices gradually died away in the distance; soon after nothing could be heard but the retreating steps of their horses.

XXXV.

Beat drums ! they come !

They have all sworn, and sworn the same oath, never to return to Castile without the count, their liege lord, as their prisoner.

They have a stone statue of him in a chariot, and are determined not to turn back until the statue turns of itself.

And they all raised their hands and swore a solemn oath that he who took one step backward would be looked upon as a traitor.

And they go on toward Arlançon, as rapidly as the oxen which draw the chariot can walk ; they no more stay in their course than does the sun.

Burgos is deserted ; only the women and children have remained there, and it is the same with the country round about.

They talk together as they go of the horse and the falcon, and wonder whether it is necessary to free Castile from the tribute she pays to Leon.

And before they enter Navarre, they meet on the frontier —

Spanish Romances.

WHILE the interview to which we have just been listening was taking place in the forest near Smiasen, the insurgents, in three divisions, left the mine of Apsyl-Corh by the main entrance, which was on a level with the bottom of a deep ravine.

Ordener, who had been assigned to Norbith's division, notwithstanding his desire to be near Kennybol, saw nothing at first but a long procession of torches, the light from which, contending with the first rays of dawn, was reflected upon the axes, pitchforks, mattocks, iron-headed clubs, enormous hammers, pick-

axes, crowbars, and all the rough weapons which the insurgents found ready to their hands, mingled with other more orthodox arms, which proved that the revolt was a conspiracy, — muskets, pikes, swords, carbines, and arquebuses. When the sun appeared, and the light of the torches changed to smoke, he was better able to take in the appearance of this remarkable army, which was advancing in disorder, with discordant songs and wild shouts, like a troop of hungry wolves on the scent of a dead body.

It was divided into three columns, or three mobs. First marched the mountaineers, led by Kennybol; they were all dressed, as he was, in skins, and had much the same fierce and bold expression and bearing. Next came the two bands of miners, commanded by Norbith and Jonas respectively, with their broad-brimmed felt hats, loose trousers, bare arms, and swarthy faces, which gazed with blinking eyes at the sun. Above these straggling, disorderly bands blood-red banners were waving, upon which were various legends, such as: “Long live Schumacker!” “Let us liberate our liberator!” “Liberty for the miners!” “Liberty for Count von Griffenfeld!” “Death to Guldenlew!” “Death to the oppressors!” “Death to Von Ahlefeld!”

The rebels seemed to look upon these standards as burdens rather than as ornaments, and they passed them from hand to hand, when the bearers were weary or wished to join in the psalmody and vociferations of their comrades with the discordant note of their horns.

The rear-guard of this motley assemblage con-

sisted of ten carts drawn by reindeer and huge asses, intended doubtless to transport the munitions of war; and the vanguard, of the giant whom Hacket brought to them. He marched alone, armed with a club and an axe, and was followed at a respectful distance by the first ranks of the division commanded by Kennybol, who kept his eyes fixed upon him; as if he were determined to keep his diabolical leader in sight through all the various transformations that it might please him to perform.

Thus disposed, the flood of rebels descended the mountains of northern Drontheimhus with abundant uproar, making the pine woods echo with blasts of the horn. It was soon swollen by various parties from Sund-Moër, Hubfallo, Kongsberg, and by the band of smiths from Smiasen, who presented a striking contrast to the other insurgents. They were tall, powerful men, armed with tongs and hammers, wearing wide leathern aprons for cuirasses, and with no standard save a tall wooden cross. They marched with sober mien, keeping perfect step, and with religious rather than military precision; they had no battle-song save psalms and hymns. Their only leader was the cross-bearer, who marched unarmed at their head.

This rabble did not meet a solitary human being upon its march. At its approach the goat-herd hurried his flock into a cave, and the peasant fled from his cabin; for the denizen of plains and valleys is everywhere the same,—he fears the bandit's horn, as he fears the bugle of the archers.

Thus they pursued their way over hills and

through forests, with here and there a village ; they followed winding roads, whereon they found more tracks of wild beasts than human footsteps ; they skirted lagunes, crossed mountain torrents, ravines, and swamps. Ordener was familiar with none of the places they passed. Once only, when his eyes spied in the distance the hazy outline of a tall, rounded cliff, he turned to one of his uncouth travelling companions, and said : —

“My friend, what is that cliff to the southward of us ? ”

“The ‘ Vulture’s Neck,’ on Oëlmœ cliff.”

Ordener sighed deeply.

XXXVI.

My daughter, may God bless you and have you in his holy keeping! — *Regnier*.

MONKEY, parrots, combs, and ribbons, everything was prepared for Frederic's reception at the Countess von Ahlefeld's apartments. She had procured at great expense a copy of *Mademoiselle de Scudéry's* latest novel. By her order it had been richly rebound with clasps of chased silver, and it lay between bottles of perfumery and boxes of paste on the dainty toilet-table, with gilded feet and inlaid top, with which she had furnished the prospective boudoir of her dear Frederic.

When she had gone through the list of trifles, and had completed all the preparations, which had made her forget her hatred for a moment, it occurred to her that she had nothing left to do but to ruin Schumacker and his daughter. General Levin's departure left them defenceless against her.

Within a short time many things had taken place in the donjon at Munckholm concerning which she had been unable to gather any but the vaguest information. Who was the serf, vassal, or peasant, who, according to Frederic's extremely ambiguous and hesitating words, had won the heart of the ex-chancellor's daughter? What were Baron Orden-

er's relations with the prisoners of Munckholm? What were the reasons for Ordener's strange and incomprehensible absence just when the two kingdoms were talking of nothing but his approaching marriage with Ulrica von Ahlefeld, whom he seemed to hold in contempt? Lastly, what had taken place between Levin von Knud and Schumacker?

The countess's brain whirled with conjectures. She determined at last, in order to clear up all these mysteries, to hazard a visit to Munckholm, — a plan which her woman's curiosity, and her interest as the bitter enemy of the captives, impelled her to adopt.

One evening, when Ethel was alone in the garden, she was engaged, for the thousandth time, in cutting some mysterious cipher or other with the diamond in her ring upon the black pillar of the gate through which Ordener took his leave. Suddenly the gate was thrown open. The maiden started, for it had not been opened before since it closed upon him.

A tall, pale woman dressed in white, stood before her. Her face wore a smile as sweet as poisoned honey, and behind her amicable, good-humored look, there lurked an expression in which hatred, malice, and involuntary admiration each had a part.

Ethel gazed at her wonderingly, almost with fear. Since her old nurse died in her arms, this was the first woman she had seen within the sombre precincts of Munckholm.

"My child," said the stranger, gently, "you are the daughter of the prisoner of Munckholm?"

Ethel could not help turning her head away;

something in her heart warned her against her visitor, and it seemed to her as if there were poison in the breath which accompanied the soft voice.

"My name is Ethel Schumacker," she replied. "My father says that in my cradle I was made Countess of Tongsberg, and Princess of Wollin."

"Your father told you that!" cried the tall woman, in a tone which she immediately changed, as she added:—

"You have been very unhappy!"

"Misfortune received me in its arms of iron at my birth," replied the maiden; "my noble father says that it will never release its hold upon me until I am dead."

A smile parted the stranger's lips, and she resumed in a compassionate tone:—

"And you make no complaint against those who caused you to be cast into this prison? You do not curse the authors of your misery?"

"No, for fear that our curses might bring upon them such misfortunes as we ourselves are burdened with."

"Do you know the authors of these misfortunes of which you speak?" continued the woman in white, with unmoved composure.

Ethel reflected a moment.

"Everything is done as God wills," she said.

"Does your father never speak of the king?"

"The king? I pray for him morning and evening, although I do not know him."

Ethel did not understand why the unknown woman bit her lips at this reply.

“Does your unhappy father, in his wrath, never speak to you of his implacable foes, General Ar-ensdorf, Bishop Spollyson, and Chancellor von Ahlefeld?”

“I know not whom you mean.”

“Do you know the name of Levin von Knud?”

The interview which took place two days before between the Governor of Drontheim and Schumacker was so fresh in Ethel's mind that she could not fail to be struck by the name of Levin von Knud.

“Levin von Knud?” she repeated; “it seems to me that he is the man for whom my father has so much esteem, almost affection.”

“What!” cried the stranger.

“Yes,” continued the maiden, “it was Levin von Knud whom my lord and father defended so earnestly day before yesterday against the Governor of Drontheim.”

These words intensified the visitor's amazement.

“Against the Governor of Drontheim! Don't make sport of me, my child; I came hither in your interest. Your father took General Levin von Knud's part against the Governor of Drontheim?”

“General? I think it was captain — but no; you are right. My father,” continued Ethel, “seemed to retain so great an attachment for this General Levin von Knud that he was very rough in his treatment of the Governor of Drontheimhus.”

“Well, this is a most mysterious thing!” said the tall, pale woman, whose curiosity grew more intense with every word. “My dear child, pray tell me

what took place between your father and the Governor of Drontheim."

This persistent questioning wearied poor Ethel.

"Am I a criminal, that you question me thus?" she asked, meeting the stranger's gaze steadily.

At this simple inquiry the other seemed disconcerted, as if she felt that the reward of her adroitness was eluding her. She rejoined, in a voice that showed some emotion:—

"You would not speak thus to me if you knew why and for whom I have come."

"Do you mean that you come from him?" cried Ethel; "do you bring me a message from him?"

All her blood rushed to her lovely face, and her heart leaped in her breast, swollen with impatience and anxiety.

"From whom?" the other asked.

The girl checked herself as she was on the point of uttering the adored name. She noticed in the stranger's eye a flash of ominous satisfaction, which seemed like a flash from hell. She said sadly:—

"You do not know whom I mean."

An expression of baffled expectation appeared for the second time on the stranger's smiling face.

"Poor girl!" she cried; "what can I do for you?"

Ethel did not hear her. Her thoughts were far away behind the northern mountains, following the footsteps of her adventurous lover. Her head was hanging down upon her breast, and her hands were clasped as if of their own will.

"Does your father hope to be released from prison?"

This question twice repeated recalled Ethel to herself.

"Yes," she said, and a tear rolled down her cheek.

The stranger's eyes sparkled at this reply.

"He hopes, you say; how? by what means? when?"

"He hopes to be released from this prison, because he hopes to be released from life."

There is sometimes a power in the very simplicity of an innocent young heart which laughs to scorn the wiles of one grown old in wickedness. Some such thought as this seemed to occur to the stranger, for her expression suddenly changed; she laid her cold hand on Ethel's arm, and said, in a tone which was almost sincere: —

"Listen; have you heard that your father's life is threatened anew by a judicial inquiry? — that he is suspected of having instigated a revolt among the miners in the North?"

The words *judicial inquiry* and *revolt* conveyed no clear idea to Ethel's mind; she raised her great black eyes to the stranger's face.

"What do you mean?"

"That your father is conspiring against the State; that his crime is on the point of being discovered; that the penalty for his crime is death."

"Death! crime!" cried the poor child.

"Crime and death," said the stranger, gravely.

"My father! my noble father!" continued Ethel.
"Alas! that he who passes his days listening while I read to him the Edda and the Gospel, should be

suspected of conspiring ! What has he ever done to you, in Heaven's name ? ”

“ Don't look at me so ; I say again that I am far from being your enemy. Your father is suspected of a serious crime, and I come and warn you. Perhaps, instead of these evidences of detestation, I may be entitled to some gratitude.”

Ethel was touched by the reproof.

“ Oh ! I pray you, pardon me, noble madame. Until now what human being have we ever seen who was not our enemy ? I was suspicious of you ; you will forgive me for it, will you not ? ”

The stranger smiled.

“ What, my child ! is it possible that you have never fallen in with a friend until to-day ? ”

A vivid blush colored Ethel's cheeks. She hesitated a moment, before she said : —

“ No, God knows the truth. We have found one friend, madame. Only one ! ”

“ Only one ! ” exclaimed the stranger eagerly. “ Tell me his name, for God's sake ; you do not know how important it is. I ask it in the interest of your father's welfare. Who is this friend ? ”

“ I do not know,” said Ethel.

The stranger turned pale.

“ Is it because I wish to be of service to you that you make sport of me ? Reflect that your father's life is at stake. Who is this friend, — tell me, who is this friend of whom you speak ? ”

“ Heaven knows, Madame, that I know nothing of him but his name, which is Ordener.”

Ethel made this reply with the unwillingness which

every one feels to utter before an indifferent person the sacred name which awakens one's whole power of loving.

"Ordener! Ordener!" repeated the unknown with great agitation, nervously playing with the edge of her white veil. "What is his father's name?" she asked, in a troubled voice.

"I cannot say," Ethel replied. "What do his father and his family matter to me? Ordener, madame, is the most noble of men."

The tone in which these words were spoken betrayed the whole secret of Ethel's heart to the keen perception of the stranger.

She recovered her composure, and without removing her eyes from the girl's face, asked this question:—

"Have you heard of the approaching marriage of the viceroy's son with the daughter of the present chancellor, Von Ahlefeld?"

She was obliged to ask the question twice in order to bring Ethel's mind to bear upon a subject which did not interest her.

"I believe so," was the only reply she made.

Her tranquillity and apparent indifference evidently surprised the stranger.

"Well, what do you think of the marriage?" she asked.

She failed to detect the slightest change in the expression of Ethel's eyes, as she replied:—

"Nothing at all. May their union prove a happy one!"

"Counts Guldenlew and Von Ahlefeld, the fathers

of the prospective bride and groom, are bitter enemies of your father."

"May the marriage of their children prove a happy one!" Ethel repeated gently.

"It has just occurred to me," continued the crafty stranger, "that if your father's life is really threatened, you might obtain his pardon through the intercession of the viceroy's son on the occasion of his marriage."

"May the blessed saints reward you for all your kind solicitude for us, madame; but how can I get the ear of the viceroy's son to entreat his intercession?"

There was such perfect good faith in the way in which these words were spoken that the stranger could not repress a gesture of amazement.

"What?" she cried; "do you not know him?"

"I know that powerful nobleman!" cried Ethel. "You forget that I have never yet seen anything outside the walls of this fortress."

"Why, what did that old fool of a Levin tell me?" muttered the tall woman between her teeth. "She does not know him. Impossible!" she said aloud; "you must have seen the viceroy's son, for he has been here."

"That may be, madame; but of all the men who have been here I have seen but the one, — my Ordener."

"Your Ordener!" interjected the unknown. "Do you know," she went on, seeming not to notice Ethel's blushes, "a young man of noble countenance, of graceful figure, and of grave and assured

bearing, — with chestnut hair, a mild, yet piercing eye, and a complexion as fresh as a girl's?"

"Oh! it's he," cried poor Ethel, "my fiancé, my beloved Ordener! Tell me, dear madame, have you any news of him? Or have you met him? He told you that he honors me with his love, did he not? He told you that my heart is all his? Alas! a poor miserable prisoner has nothing in the world but her love. Oh! my noble lover! Less than a week has passed since he stood where you now stand, with his green cloak, beneath which beats the most generous of hearts, and the black plume waving gracefully above his head."

She broke off her rhapsody in alarm. She saw the tall stranger tremble, and go red and pale by turns, and heard her voice thundering in her ears: —

"Wretched girl! your lover is Ordener Guldenlew, the betrothed husband of Ulrica von Ahlefeld, and the son of your father's deadly enemy, the Viceroy of Norway!"

Ethel fell to the ground unconscious.

XXXVII.

Caupolican. March so cautiously that the earth itself may not hear the sound of your footsteps. Redouble your precautions, my friends. If we arrive without being heard, I will answer for the victory.

Tucapel. The night has spread its veil over everything; awe-inspiring darkness envelops the earth. We hear no sentinel, nor have we detected a spy.

Ringo. Forward!

Tucapel. What do I hear? Are we discovered? — LOPE DE VEGA: *L'Araucque Dompté.*

“SAY, Guldon Stayper, old comrade, do you know that this northerly wind is beginning to beat the hair on my cap down around my face in fine fashion?”

The speaker was Kennybol, who had taken his eyes away from the giant at the head of the insurgents long enough to glance at one of the mountaineers, who chanced, in the haphazard disposition of the forces, to be marching beside him at the moment.

The person addressed shook his head, and shifted his banner from one shoulder to the other with a deep sigh of fatigue.

“Hum! I believe, captain, that in this infernal gorge of the Black Pillar, where the wind rushes like a torrent, we shall not be quite so warm as the fire dancing on the hearth.”

“We must build such fires that the old owls will be awakened in their ruined palaces on the cliff-tops.

I am not fond of owls; that frightful night when I saw the fairy Ubfem, she took the form of an owl."

"By St. Sylvester!" ejaculated Guldon Stayper, turning his head away, "the angel of the wind is dealing us some vicious blows with her wings. If you take my advice, Captain Kennybol, you will set fire to all the birches on one of the mountains; it would be a fine thing to see an army warming itself with a forest."

"God forbid, my dear Guldon! how about the deer, and the gerfalcons, and the pheasants? Cook game, if you please, but don't burn it alive."

Old Guldon began to laugh.

"Ah! captain, you are still the same old devil of a Kennybol, — a wolf after deer, a bear after wolves, and a buffalo after bears."

"Are we far from the Black Pillar?" asked a voice among the hunters.

"My friend," said Kennybol, "we shall enter the gorge just at nightfall; in a moment now we shall be at the Four Crosses."

There was a moment of silence, during which nothing could be heard but the step of many feet, the whistling of the north wind, and in the distance the song of the smiths of Smiasen.

"Friend Stayper," said Kennybol, after whistling for a moment the air of the hunter Rollo, "you passed a few days at Drontheim?"

"Yes, captain; my brother George Stayper, the fisherman, was sick, and I went to take his place in his boat for a while, so that his poor family might not die of hunger during his illness."

“While you were at Drontheim had you any opportunity to see this count, this prisoner — Schumacker — Gleffenhem — what is his name? — well, this man, in whose name we have taken up arms against the royal guardianship, and whose coat-of-arms you undoubtedly have embroidered on that flame-colored banner of yours?”

“It’s very heavy,” said Guldon. “Do you mean the prisoner at the fortress of Munckholm, — the count? Yes? Well, how do you suppose, my gallant captain, that I could see him. I should have needed to have,” he added, lowering his voice, “the eyes of this demon marching ahead of us (who, by the way, seems to leave no odor of sulphur behind him) — this Hans of Iceland who sees through thick walls, or the magic ring of Queen Mab, who passes through keyholes. There is only one person among us at this moment, I am sure, who has seen the count, the prisoner you speak of.”

“Only one? Ah! yes, Herr Hacket. But Hacket is no longer with us. He left us last night to return —”

“I don’t mean Herr Hacket, captain.”

“Who, then?”

“The young man with the green mantle and black plume, who dropped down among us last night.”

“Well, what of him?”

“Why,” said Guldon, drawing nearer to Kennybol, “he is the man who knows the count — this famous count — as I know you, Captain Kennybol.”

Kennybol looked at Guldon, winked his left eye, and clapped him on the shoulder with the triumphant

expression with which we are very apt to give vent to our self-satisfaction at our penetration.

“ I suspected as much ! ”

“ Yes, captain,” continued Guldon Stayper, shifting the flame-colored banner back to the first shoulder, “ I maintain that the young man in green has seen the count — I know not how you call him, but the one in whose behalf we are about to fight — in the donjon of Munckholm, and he seemed to consider his visit to the prison as important a matter as you or I would consider a visit to a royal park.”

“ How do you know all this, Brother Guldon ? ”

The old mountaineer took Kennybol’s arm, and half-opened his otter-skin doublet with suspicious precaution.

“ Look ! ” he said.

“ By my patron saint ! ” ejaculated Kennybol ; “ it shines like diamonds.”

Guldon Stayper’s cheap waist-belt was, in fact, held in place by a diamond buckle.

“ And it is as true that they are genuine diamonds,” he rejoined, closing his frock again, “ as it is that the moon is two days’ journey from the earth, or that my belt is made of the skin of a dead buffalo.”

But Kennybol’s face grew dark, and his expression changed from astonishment to severity. He looked down at the ground as he said with a sort of savage solemnity : —

“ Guldon Stayper, of Chol-Sœ village in the Kole mountains, your father, Medprath Stayper, died at the age of one hundred and two, without having ever done anything to be ashamed of, — for it’s no sin

to kill a stag or elk belonging to the king, inadvertently. Guldon Stayper, fifty-seven winters have passed over your gray head, and none but an owl is still youthful at that age. Guldon Stayper, my good comrade, I would rather that the diamonds in that buckle were so many seeds of millet, if you did not come legitimately by it, — as legitimately as the royal pheasant comes by the bit of lead from the shot-gun."

The tone in which the leader of the mountaineers pronounced this admonition was both impressive and threatening.

"As truly as our Captain Kennybol is the most daring hunter of Kole," rejoined Guldon, coolly, "and as these diamonds are honest diamonds, they are honestly and legally mine."

"Do you mean it?" said Kennybol, with an accent half-way between belief and doubt.

"God and my blessed patron know," replied Guldon, "that it happened one evening just as I had pointed out the Spladgest at Drontheim to certain children of our good mother Norway, who had in charge the body of an officer found on the beach at Urchtal. It was about a week since. A young man came to my boat. 'To Munckholm!' he said. I cared little for the job, captain; a bird does not from choice fly around a cage. However, the young gentleman was very high and mighty, and was followed by a servant leading two horses; he leaped into my boat as if it belonged to him, and I took my oars, that is to say, my brother's oars. When we reached Munckholm my passenger, after

a word with the sergeant who was in command at the fort, no doubt, tossed me in payment — and God is my witness that I speak truth, captain — tossed me the diamond buckle which I just showed you, and which would belong to my brother George, instead of to me, had it not been that, at the time when the traveller, whom Heaven bless, hired me, my work for my brother was at an end. That is the truth, Captain Kennybol.”

“ Very good.”

Gradually the leader's countenance assumed as serene an expression as its natural sternness and gloom would permit, and he asked Guldon in a much milder voice : —

“ Are you perfectly sure, old comrade, that that young man was the same who is now with Norbith behind us ? ”

“ Perfectly sure. I could recognize among ten thousand faces the face of the man who made my fortune. Besides, the cloak and the black feather are the same.”

“ I believe you, Guldon.”

“ It is plain that he was on his way to visit the famous prisoner ; for if he had not had some mysterious purpose he would not have been so generous to the boatman ; and then, too, here he is among us — ”

“ You are right.”

“ And I have a shrewd idea, captain, that this young stranger is on much more confidential terms with this count whom we propose to set free than Herr Hacket, who seems to me fit for nothing more than to whine like a wild-cat, upon my word ! ”

Kennybol nodded significantly.

"You have said just what I was about to say, comrade. I should be much more inclined, in this whole business, to take orders from this young gentleman than from Hacket. By St. Sylvester and St. Olaüs, comrade Guldon, I believe that the presence of this devil from Iceland in our ranks is due much less to Hacket — the babbling crow! — than to this stranger."

"Really, captain?" said Guldon.

Kennybol was opening his mouth to reply, when a hand was laid on his shoulder. It was Norbith.

"Kennybol, we are betrayed! Gormon Woëstroëm has just come in from the south. He says that the whole regiment of arquebusiers is marching against us, that the uhlans of Schleswig are at Sparbo, and that three companies of mounted Danish dragoons are waiting at the village of Lœvig. All along the road he saw as many green jackets as there are bushes. Let us push on to Skongen, and not halt for one second until we are there. We can at least defend ourselves there. Gormon says further that he thought he could see gun-barrels glistening behind the thickets, as he came through the defile of the Black Pillar."

The young leader was pale and excited; but his expression and the tone of his voice spoke of unaltered daring and determination.

"Impossible!" cried Kennybol.

"It is certain," said Norbith.

"But Herr Hacket —"

“Is a traitor or a coward. Be sure of what I tell you, comrade Kennybol. Where is this Hacket?”

At that moment old Jonas joined them. It was easy to see that he had heard the alarming news, by the profound discouragement depicted on his features.

The eyes of the two old men, Jonas and Kennybol, met, and they began to shake their heads, as if by preconcerted arrangement.

“Well, Jonas? Well, Kennybol?” said Norbith.

The aged leader of the Fa-roër miners passed his hand slowly across his wrinkled brow, and replied in a low voice to the glance of the aged leader of the Kole mountaineers:—

“Yes, it’s only too true, only too certain. Gorman Woëstroëm saw them.”

“If that is so,” said Kennybol, “what are we to do?”

“What are we to do?” Jonas repeated.

“It seems to me, comrade Jonas, that we should do well to halt.”

“And better still, brother Kennybol, to fall back.”

“Halt! fall back!” cried Norbith. “We must go forward!”

The two old men turned and gazed at their young companion with cold surprise.

“Go forward!” said Kennybol. “What about the Munckholm arquebusiers?”

“And the Schleswig uhlands?” Jonas added.

“And the Danish dragoons?” said Kennybol.

Norbith stamped impatiently.

“And the royal guardianship? and my mother, who is dying of hunger and cold?”

“Thousand devils! the royal guardianship!” exclaimed Jonas, with a shudder.

“What does that matter?” said Kennybol, the mountaineer.

Jonas took Kennybol by the hand.

“My worthy hunter,” he said, “you have n’t the honor of being a ward of our glorious monarch Christian IV. May the blessed King Olaüs, who is in heaven, deliver us from his guardianship!”

“Address that appeal to your sword, rather,” said Norbith.

“Brave words cost a young man but little,” retorted Kennybol; “but consider that if we go any farther all these green jackets —”

“I consider this, that we shall gain nothing by sneaking back to the mountains like foxes before wolves, for they know our names and that we have risen in revolt; and taking one death with another, I prefer a bullet from an arquebuse to the hangman’s noose.”

Jonas nodded his assent.

“The devil!” he muttered; “the guardianship for our brothers, and the gibbet for us! Norbith may very well be in the right.”

“Give me your hand, my gallant Norbith,” said Kennybol; “there is danger in either course. It is much better to march straight to the precipice, than to fall over the edge backwards.”

“Forward, then! forward!” cried old Jonas, striking the hilt of his sword.

Norbith warmly grasped a hand of each.

“Hark ye, my brothers! Be bold as I am, and I will be prudent like you. Let us keep on to-day to Skongen; the garrison there is weak, and we will drive them out. We will pass through the gorge of the Black Pillar, because we must, but let it be in perfect silence. We must pass through, even though the enemy are in ambush there. I do not think that the arquebusiers have yet reached the Bridge of Ordals, before Skongen. But no matter. Silence!”

“Silence! so be it,” Kennybol repeated.

“Now, Jonas,” continued Norbith, “let us return to our stations. To-morrow perhaps we shall be at Drontheim, in spite of arquebusiers, uhlands, dragoons, and all the green jackets in the South.”

The three leaders parted. Soon the word *silence* was passed from rank to rank, and the band of rebels, among whom the most tumultuous disorder had prevailed but a moment before, marched along through the twilight solitude, like a procession of speechless phantoms in the winding paths of a graveyard.

The path which they were following narrowed every moment, and led between two rocky ramparts which grew rapidly steeper and steeper. Just as the moon rose above the mountains, amid a mass of clouds, which moved rapidly back and forth across her face, assuming strange shapes, Kennybol turned to Guldon Stayper.

“We are just entering the gorge of the Black Pillar,” he said. “Silence!”

The roaring of the torrent, which follows every

winding of the road between the two mountains, fell upon their ears, and to the south they could see the huge oblong mass of granite, known as the Black Pillar, standing sharply out against the gray sky and the snow on the neighboring mountains; to the westward, the horizon, piled up with clouds, was bounded by the forest of Sparbo on the one hand, and on the other by a series of cliffs, rising one above the other like a giant's staircase.

The insurgents marched on, compelled to lengthen out their columns in the winding road throttled between the two mountains. They plunged into the dark defile without lighting their torches, and without the slightest noise. Even their footsteps could not be heard amid the deafening uproar of the waterfalls, and the howling of a powerful wind, which bent the patriarchal trees, and sent the clouds whirling around the snow-covered peaks. Buried as they were in the dark depths of the defile, the rays of the moon, which was now and again hidden by clouds, did not reach the blades of their pikes, and the white eagles who flew hither and thither over their heads did not suspect that such a multitude was intruding upon their domain.

Once old Guldon Stayper touched Kennybol's shoulder with the butt of his carbine.

"Captain! captain! I see something shining behind yon clump of holly and furze."

"I see it, too," whispered the leader, "it's the reflection of the clouds in the water of the stream."

And they trudged on.

Again Guldon suddenly seized his chief by the arm.

“Look!” he said; “are n’t those gun-barrels glistening in the shadow of yon rock?”

Kennybol gazed for a moment, then shook his head, and said:—

“Have no fear, brother Guldon. It’s a ray of moonlight shining on a bit of ice.”

There was nothing to arouse alarm, and the various divisions, marching peaceably along through the windings of the gorge, forgot all the dangerous elements of the situation.

After two hours of marching, which was often difficult and wearisome, on account of the trunks of trees and blocks of granite with which the road was obstructed, the vanguard entered the birch wood which marks the southern end of the gorge of the Black Pillar, overhung by high, moss-grown cliffs.

Guldon Stayper approached Kennybol to say that he was glad that they were almost clear of the accursed place, and that they ought to return thanks to St. Sylvester that the Black Pillar had not been fatal to them.

Kennybol began to laugh, swearing that he had never shared his old woman’s fears; for with most men, when danger has passed, it has never existed, and they then seek to prove, by a great display of contempt, the courage which they might not have displayed in the face of danger.

At that moment two small round lights, like burning coals, attracted his attention in the dense thicket at the side of the road.

“By the salvation of my soul!” he said in an undertone, seizing Guldon’s arm, “yonder is a pair

of flaming eyes which certainly belong to the finest serval that ever snarled in a thicket."

"You are right," returned old Stayper; "if the demon of Iceland were not marching ahead of us I would believe that they were his cursed eyes —"

"Hush!" cried Kennybol. "'Faith," he continued, seizing his carbine, "it sha'n't be said that a creature like that passed under Kennybol's eyes with impunity."

The shot rang out before Guldon Stayper, who tried to throw up the imprudent hunter's arm, could effect his purpose. The reply to the loud report of the carbine came, not in the shape of the piercing yell of a wild-cat, but of a horrible, tiger-like roar, followed by a burst of human laughter that was even more horrible. No one heard the report echo from rock to rock, and die gradually away in the depths of the mountains; for the flash of the igniting powder had hardly burned a hole in the darkness, before a thousand hoarse voices suddenly rang out on the mountain sides, in the ravines, and in the forests, a shout of "Long live the king!" loud and startling as a thunder-clap, echoed over the heads of the rebels, at their sides, before and behind them, and the murderous flash of a death-dealing volley of musketry burst upon them, and revealed to their eyes amid the clouds of red smoke, a battalion behind every rock, and a soldier behind every tree.

XXXVIII.

To arms ! to arms, my captains !

The Captive of Ochali.

WILL the indulgent reader go back with us to the early hours of the day which has just passed, and fancy himself at Skongen, which village the regiment of arquebusiers, whom we met on the road thither in the thirtieth chapter of this veracious narrative, marched into while the insurgents were marching out of the mine of Apsyl-Corh.

After issuing orders for billeting the men of his command, Baron Voethaün, the colonel commanding the regiment, was about entering the inn selected for his own quarters near the village gate, when he felt a heavy hand laid familiarly upon his shoulder.

He turned about, and faced a short man, wearing a broad-brimmed straw hat, which shaded his features so completely that nothing but a bushy red beard could be seen. He was closely wrapped in the folds of a sort of cloak of coarse gray cloth, which seemed, judging from the remains of a hood, to have been at some time a hermit's frock, and which left nothing visible but his hands, encased in capacious gloves.

"Well, my good man, what the devil do you want with me?" demanded the colonel, roughly.

"Colonel of the arquebusiers of Munckholm," said

the man, with a curious expression, "follow me a moment ; I have information to give you."

The colonel stood for a moment in speechless amazement.

"Important information, colonel," the little man repeated.

His persistence persuaded Baron Vœthaün. In the critical condition of the province, and with the mission which he had in hand, no intelligence was to be disdained.

"Lead on," he said.

The dwarf walked ahead, and halted as soon as they were outside the village.

"Colonel," he said, "have you any desire to wipe out all the insurgents at one stroke?"

"That would not be a bad way to begin the campaign," replied the colonel, laughingly.

"Very well ; station all your men in ambush this very day in the gorge of the Black Pillar, two miles from this village , the rebels will camp there to-night. At the first flash of light that you see, be down upon them with your troops. It will be an easy victory."

"It is good advice, my fine fellow, and I thank you for it. But how do you know what you tell me?"

"If you knew me, colonel, you would be more likely to ask me how it could happen that I should not know it."

"Why, who are you, pray?"

"I am not here to tell you that," said the man, with a stamp of his foot.

"Have no fear. Whoever you may be, the service

you render us will be your protection. Do you happen to be one of the rebels yourself? "

" I refused to join them."

" Why conceal your name, then, if you are a faithful subject of the king? "

" What does my name matter to you? "

The colonel concluded to seek light on another subject from this strange adviser.

" Tell me," he said, " if it is true that the brigands are commanded by the notorious Hans of Iceland."

" Hans of Iceland ! "

The dwarf repeated the name with a most extraordinary inflection.

The baron began to ask the question again, but a burst of laughter, which might have passed for an angry roar, was the only reply he could elicit. He tried several other questions as to the number of the miners, and their leaders, but the little man's mouth was closed.

" Colonel of the arquebusiers of Munckholm, I have told you all I have to tell. Station yourself to-day in ambush in the gorge of the Black Pillar, with all your regiment, and you can wipe out the whole rabble."

" You do not choose to disclose your identity, and so you make it impossible for the king to show his gratitude ; but it is none the less fitting that Baron Voethaün should prove his gratitude to you for the service you render him."

The colonel threw his purse at the dwarf's feet.

" Keep your gold, colonel," he said ; " I have no need of it. Furthermore," he added, pointing to a

large bag, which hung at the cord around his waist, "if you demanded a reward for slaughtering these men, I am in a position to give you gold in exchange for their blood."

Before the colonel had recovered from the amazement caused by the inexplicable words of this mysterious creature, he had disappeared.

Baron Voethaün slowly retraced his steps, asking himself how much reliance he could afford to place on this man's information. When he arrived at his quarters a letter was handed him, sealed with the crest of the grand chancellor. It was a communication from Count von Ahlefeld in person, containing, to the colonel's unbounded astonishment, the same information and the same advice which had just been given him at the village gate by the incomprehensible person with the straw hat and large gloves.

XXXIX.

Ay! that was a day of cleaving of shields, when a hundred banners were bent forwards over the heads of the valiant, and blood flowed round like water, and death was held better than flight. A Saxon bard had called it a feast of the swords — a gathering of the eagles to the prey — the clashing of bills upon shield and helmet — the shouting of battle, more joyful than the clamour of a bridal. — SIR WALTER SCOTT: *Ivanhoe*.

WE shall not undertake to describe here the frightful confusion into which the disorderly columns of the rebels were thrown, when, penned within the narrow defile, they suddenly saw the hillsides bristling with men, and every cavern crowded with unexpected enemies. It would have been difficult to say whether the long-drawn shout, made up of a thousand lesser cries, which went up from their ranks thus abruptly beset, was a shout of despair, of terror, or of rage. The terrible fire which the ambushed files of the royal troops vomited upon them from every direction grew hotter from moment to moment; and before a single shot, save Kennybol's disastrous one, had been fired from their side, they could see nothing save a stifling cloud of red-hot smoke, through which the messengers of death flew blindly, — a cloud so thick that no one of them could recognize any but himself, or distinguish clearly in the distance the arquebusiers and uhlans and

dragoons, who appeared in blurred masses on the face of the cliffs and on the edge of the woods, like devils in a furnace.

The various bands, straggling along over a mile or more of a narrow, winding road, bordered on one side by a deep and rapid stream, and on the other by a wall of rock, which made it impossible for them to fall back, resembled a long serpent cut into several pieces, when he has straightened out all his folds, and the living fragments writhe about in their bloody foam, striving to unite.

When the first shock of the surprise had passed away, a common sentiment of despair seemed to act upon all these men who were naturally fierce and wild and fearless. Furious at being thus mown down without power of defence, this great crowd of brigands gave forth, as if from a single pair of lungs, a shout, which drowned for a moment all the uproar made by their exultant enemies; and when these latter saw them without leaders, without order, and almost without weapons, clambering up the perpendicular cliffs under a murderous fire, clinging with teeth and nails to stumps and briers, waving hammers and iron forks, these well-armed soldiers, drawn up in perfect order in an advantageous position, and who had not yet lost a single man, could not repress an involuntary shudder of fear.

Time and again, some of the infuriated creatures succeeded in attaining the heights occupied by the assailants, sometimes over bridges built of dead bodies, and sometimes by climbing upon the shoulders

of their companions, who clung to the jutting rocks, veritable living ladders. But no sooner had they yelled, "*Liberty!*" no sooner had they raised their axes or their knotted clubs, no sooner had they shown their blackened faces, foaming with frantic rage, than they were hurled down into the abyss, dragging with them such of their venturesome comrades as they encountered in their fall, hanging to the bushes, or clinging by their finger-ends to some projecting point of rock.

All the efforts of these poor wretches to fly, or to defend themselves were of no avail; all the issues from the ravine were closed, and every accessible point bristled with soldiers. The majority of the luckless rebels bit the dust in the road, after breaking their twibills or their cutlasses against a mass of granite. Some folded their arms and sat upon the rocks beside the road, with their eyes fixed on the ground, and there waited, without speaking or moving, for a friendly bullet to knock them over into the stream. Some few of them, whom Hacket's forethought had provided with wretched arquebuses, sent a few scattering shots at random among the rocks, toward the mouths of the caverns whence the pitiless showers of bullets rained ceaselessly down upon them. A tumultuous roar of voices, in which the frantic shouts of the insurgent leaders were mingled with the calm commands of the officers, intensified the intermittent, frequently recurring din of the musketry, while a ruddy, reeking vapor rose from the field of carnage, casting a wavering light against the mountain side, and the torrent, whitened with

foam, rushed like an enemy between the two parties of enemies, carrying with it its booty of dead bodies.

In the early part of the action — of the slaughter, rather — the Kole mountaineers, led by the brave but reckless Kennybol, suffered most heavily. The reader will remember that they formed the vanguard of the insurgent army, and that they had entered the birch wood at the southern extremity of the gorge. Before the unlucky Kennybol could reload his weapon, this wood was suddenly peopled, as if by magic, with sharp-shooters, who hemmed them in with a circle of flame, while from a sort of rocky platform, above which towered huge leaning rocks, a whole battalion of the Munckholm regiment, drawn up in a square, poured volley after volley into them without remission. At that horrible moment Kennybol, in despair, turned his eyes in the direction of the mysterious giant; for he could see no hope, unless in the exertion of some such superhuman power as Hans of Iceland was supposed to possess. But he did not see the awe-inspiring demon suddenly spread two immense wings, and soar over the heads of the combatants, vomiting forth flames and death upon the arquebusiers; he did not see him suddenly rise among the clouds and overturn a mountain upon their assailants, or stamp upon the ground, and cause an abyss to open under the ambushed battalions. No; the redoubtable Hans fell back as he did himself before the first volley, and came to him with anxious face to ask for a carbine; for his axe, he said, in a voice much

like the voice of most mortals, was as useless at such a time as an old woman's distaff.

Kennybol, wondering greatly, but not shaken in his faith, handed his own weapon to the giant with a feeling of terror, which almost made him forget his fear of the bullets which were raining about him. Still hoping to witness a prodigy, he watched to see his carbine become, in Hans of Iceland's hands, as large as a cannon, or change to a winged dragon darting flames from its eyes, mouth, and nostrils. But he watched in vain, and the poor hunter's amazement reached its climax when he saw the demon load his carbine with powder and ball, just as he might have done himself, sight it in the ordinary way, and discharge it with a much less accurate aim than Kennybol himself would have taken. In blank amazement he watched him repeat the operation mechanically time after time ; and, convinced at last that he must cease to expect a miracle, he cast about for some natural means of extricating his companions and himself from their serious plight. His poor old comrade, Guldon Stayper, had already fallen at his side, riddled with wounds, and all the mountaineers, panic-stricken at their inability to escape, hemmed in as they were on every side, were huddling together like sheep, with pitiful yells of terror and despair, and with no thought of defending themselves.

Kennybol at once saw that this compact mass of men offered a sure target to the enemy, and that every volley laid a score of his followers in the dust. He ordered them to scatter among the thickets along

the road, which was much wider at that point than elsewhere in the ravine, to hide in the underbrush, and to return as best they could the increasingly destructive fire of the sharpshooters and the battalion. The mountaineers, who were for the most part well-armed, being all hunters, obeyed their leader's orders with a meekness which they might not have exhibited at a less critical moment ; for when face to face with danger men generally lose their heads, and at such times they are glad to obey any one who undertakes to furnish presence of mind for all.

This prudent measure was very far from leading to victory, however, or even to safety. Already more than half of the mountaineers had fallen, and despite the example and encouraging words of their leader and the giant, several of them, leaning on their useless muskets, or stretching themselves on the ground among the wounded, persisted in waiting for death to come to them, without taking the trouble to deal it out to anybody else first. It will seem surprising, perhaps, that men who were accustomed to laugh at death every day, climbing from glacier to glacier in pursuit of wild beasts, should have lost their courage so soon ; but it must be borne in mind that in ordinary hearts courage is confined within well-defined limits. A man may laugh at a volley of grape, and tremble in the darkness, or on the edge of a precipice ; another may defy savage animals day after day, cross chasms at a leap, and yet run away from a discharge of artillery. It often happens that intrepidity is a matter of habit, and that a man dreads death none the less, because he has ceased to dread it in certain particular shapes.

Kennybol, surrounded by heaps of his dying fellows, was beginning to lose courage himself, although he had as yet received no wound save a slight scratch on the left arm, and although he saw that the diabolical giant was still plying the trade of musketeer with comforting impassibility. Suddenly he noticed evidences of an extraordinary degree of confusion in the death-dealing battalion on the height, — confusion which certainly could not be caused by any damage resulting from the very weak firing of his mountaineers. He heard heart-rending cries of distress, exclamations of fright, and curses from dying lips, issuing from the victorious ranks. Soon the firing diminished materially in volume, the smoke lifted, and he could distinctly see huge blocks of granite falling among the arquebusiers of the Munckholm regiment from the high cliff, which, as we have said, dominated the platform upon which they were posted. These fragments followed one another with lightning-like rapidity ; he could hear them striking against one another, and falling with a crash among the soldiers, who were flying in every direction in the utmost disorder.

When his mind had grasped the fact of this unexpected relief, Kennybol looked around, — but no, the giant was still there ! The mountaineer was dumfounded, for he supposed that Hans of Iceland had at last taken flight, and stationed himself on top of the cliff, whence he was hurling down destruction upon the enemy. He looked up to the point whence the huge masses were falling, and could see nothing. He could not believe, therefore, that a part of the

insurgents had succeeded in reaching that vantage-ground, for he could not see the glitter of arms, nor hear aught that sounded like a shout of triumph.

Meanwhile the fire from the platform had entirely ceased ; the dense woods hid from sight what remained of the battalion, who were doubtless forming again at the foot of the cliff. The firing of the sharpshooters, too, had fallen off in great measure. Kennybol, like a skilful general, made good use of this un hoped-for opportunity ; he aroused his companions, and pointed out to them, by the dull reddish light which hovered over the scene of carnage, the heap of corpses on the rocky platform, among the blocks of granite which continued to fall from time to time. Thereupon the mountaineers replied to the groans of their enemies with shouts of victory ; they formed in a column, and, although still harassed by the sharpshooters in the thickets, were filled with a new store of courage, and determined to force their way out of the fatal defile.

The column thus formed was about to move ; Kennybol was in the act of giving the signal on his horn amid shouts of " Liberty ! liberty ! No more wardship ! " when they heard trumpet and drum sounding the charge in front of them. The next moment the remnant of the battalion from the platform, strengthened by some fresh troops, appeared at a turn in the road, within gunshot, and displayed to the mountaineers a bristling line of pikes and bayonets, sustained by numerous other lines which they could not count.

The battalion halted when they came thus unex-

pectedly upon Kennybol's column, and the man who seemed to be in command came forward toward the mountaineers, waving a small white flag and escorted by a trumpet.

Kennybol was not disconcerted by the unlooked-for appearance of this troop. There is a point, in one's appreciation of a present danger, when surprise and fear are impossible.

At the first notes of the trumpet and drum the old fox from the Kole mountains ordered a halt. When the front rank of the battalion wheeled into sight in good order, he ordered all the carbines loaded, and drew up his men two by two, so as to present a smaller surface to the enemy. He took his place at their head beside the giant, with whom, in the heat of action, he was beginning to feel on quite familiar terms, having ventured to notice that his eyes were not quite so flaming as the fire of a forge, and that his alleged claws were not so very different from human nails as they were said to be.

When he saw the commanding officer of the royal arquebusiers coming forward with a flag of truce as if to surrender, and found that the fire of the sharpshooters had ceased altogether, although their presence in the woods was still disclosed by their shouting from one to another, he suspended his defensive preparations for a moment.

Meanwhile the officer with the white flag had crossed half the space between the two columns; he stopped, and the trumpet thrice blew the summons. The officer then shouted in a loud voice, which the mountaineers heard distinctly above the constantly

increasing uproar of the conflict that was taking place in the mountain gorges behind them : —

“ In the king’s name ! The king’s pardon is granted to those who lay down their arms, and deliver up their leaders to be dealt with by his Majesty’s sovereign justice ! ”

The words were hardly out of his mouth when a shot rang out from a neighboring clump of bushes. The officer tottered ; he took a step or two forward, with his banner in the air, then fell, crying : —

“ Treachery ! ”

No one could say whence came the fatal shot.

“ Treachery ! Cowards ! ” yelled the arquebusiers, in a frenzy of rage ; and a fearful volley carried havoc among the mountaineers.

“ Treachery ! ” yelled they in their turn, frantic to see their brothers falling at their sides ; and a general discharge replied to the unexpected volley of the royal troops.

“ Upon them, my men ! Death to the cowards ! Death ! ” cried the officers.

“ Death ! ” echoed the mountaineers.

On both sides the combatants rushed forward with naked blades, and the two columns came together almost upon the body of the unfortunate officer, with a fearful din of weapons clashing and men yelling.

The opposing forces were mingled together in inextricable confusion. Rebel leaders, royal officers, soldiers, and mountaineers fought hand to hand, struck and clawed and strangled like two troops of starving tigers, meeting in a desert. The long pikes and bayonets and halberds were useless, and only swords

and axes gleamed above their heads; many of the combatants, indeed, were fighting body to body, and could make use of nothing except their daggers and their teeth.

Mountaineers and arquebusiers were animated in the same degree by the same sentiment of furious wrath. They all yelled "Treachery!" and "Vengeance!" The *mêlée* had reached that point where ferocity enters every heart, where one prefers the death of an enemy whom one does not know, to one's own life, where one stumbles heedlessly over heaps of dead and wounded, among whom the dying man rouses himself to continue the struggle by biting the foot of the man who tramples upon him.

At that juncture there came upon the scene a little man, whom some of the combatants mistook at first, through the smoke and the reeking vapor from the dead, for a wild beast, as his garments were made of skins. He threw himself into the thick of the slaughter with blood-curdling laughter, and howls of joy. No one knew whence he came, nor on which side he was fighting, for his stone axe made no selection of its victims, and clove the skull of a rebel or a soldier with the same zest. It did seem, however, as if he took more fiendish delight in massacring the arquebusiers from Munckholm. Every one fell back before him; he ran hither and thither like a demon; and his axe, dripping with blood, whirled ceaselessly around his head, sending great pieces of flesh, broken limbs, and shattered bones in every direction. He yelled "Vengeance!" too, like all the rest, and mumbled strange words, among which the

name of Gill was repeated again and again. This dreadful stranger exulted in the carnage as in a sumptuous feast.

A mountaineer upon whom his deadly glance had fallen threw himself at the feet of the giant upon whom Kennybol founded so many shattered hopes, crying : —

“Hans of Iceland, save me !”

“Hans of Iceland !” the little man repeated.

He rushed up to the giant.

“Are you Hans of Iceland ?” he demanded.

The giant’s only reply was to raise his axe aloft. The little man darted back, and the weapon buried itself in the skull of the poor wretch who had implored the giant’s aid.

The stranger began to laugh.

“Oho ! By Ingolphus ! I supposed Hans of Iceland was cleverer than that.”

“Thus Hans of Iceland saves those who call upon him,” said the giant.

“You are right.”

The two champions fell upon each other furiously. The stone axe and the iron axe came together amid a shower of sparks ; the force with which they met was so great that the heads of both were shivered.

With the rapidity of thought the disarmed dwarf seized a heavy wooden club dropped by some dying man and, avoiding the giant, who stooped to seize him in his arms, dealt his colossal adversary a furious blow upon the forehead.

The giant uttered a stifled cry and fell. The dwarf trampled upon him, foaming with joy.

"You were carrying a name that was too heavy for you," he said; and tightening his grasp on his victorious club, he went in search of other victims.

The giant was not dead. The violence of the blow stunned him, and almost killed him. He was beginning to open his eyes and move his limbs slightly, when an arquebusier spied him and pounced upon him.

"Hans of Iceland is taken!" he cried. "Victory!"

"Hans of Iceland is taken!" was echoed on both sides in tones of triumph or dismay.

The little man had disappeared.

For some time past the mountaineers had felt that they must give way to superior numbers; for the arquebusiers were re-enforced by the sharpshooters from the forest and by detachments of uhlans and dismounted dragoons, who came up from time to time from the heart of the ravine, where the surrender of the principal rebel leaders had put a stop to the carnage. Valiant Kennybol, wounded early in the action, was a prisoner. The capture of Hans of Iceland destroyed what little courage the mountaineers could still boast. They laid down their arms.

When the first rays of the dawn fell upon the sharp peaks of the mountains, which were still buried in darkness, the gorge of the Black Pillar was given over to awful, deathlike silence, broken only by an occasional feeble moaning, which the morning breeze took up and tossed about. Black clouds of crows were scurrying toward the fatal spot from all quarters of the heavens, and some poor goatherds, who passed

along the edge of the cliffs during the morning twilight, hurried back in mortal terror to their huts, vowing that they saw a beast with a human face sitting on a heap of corpses in the gorge of the Black Pillar, drinking blood.

XL.

Let him who chooses consume himself with this hidden fire !

Brantôme.

“ OPEN the window, daughter ; the glass is very thick and dirty, and I would like to see a little daylight.”

“ Daylight, father ! why, the night is almost here.”

“ The sun is still shining on the hills along the edge of the fiord. I feel that I must have a breath of fresh air through the bars. The sky is so clear and beautiful ! ”

“ There is a storm brewing below the horizon, father.”

“ A storm, Ethel ! Where do you see any signs of a storm ? ”

“ I anticipate a storm, father, just because the sky is so clear.”

The old man looked at her in amazement.

“ If I had reasoned so in my youth, I should not be here,” he said ; then added, with less feeling : —

“ What you say is quite true, but such reflections are not suited to your tender years. I do not understand how it happens that your youthful thoughts run so close to my long experience.”

Ethel cast down her eyes, as if embarrassed by that simple reflection. Her hands were clasped

sorrowfully, and her breast heaved with a profound sigh.

“For many days you have been pale, my daughter,” said the old man, “as if there were no life to the blood in your veins ; these last few mornings you have met me with red and swollen eyelids, with eyes that tell of weeping and of sleepless nights. Several days I have passed in silence, and not once has your voice sought to rouse me from gloomy meditation on my past. You are even more melancholy than I ; and yet you have not, as your father has, the burden of a whole life of disappointment and uselessness weighing upon your soul. You have grown up in affliction, but it cannot reach your heart. The clouds of the morning soon disappear. You are at that time of life when one selects from among one’s dreams a future unconnected with the present, whatever it may be. What is troubling you, my daughter ? pray tell me. It is the one advantage of this monotonous captivity that we are not exposed to unforeseen calamities. What fault have you committed ? I cannot believe that you are thus depressed on my account ; you ought by this time to be accustomed to my irreparable misfortune. Hope, it is true, no longer speaks in my words ; but that is no reason why I should be compelled to read despair in your eyes.”

The prisoner’s harsh voice became almost paternally tender as he spoke. Ethel stood before him without a word. Suddenly she turned away, a convulsive movement passed through her body, and she fell on her knees on the stone floor, hiding her face

in her hands as if to force back the tears and sobs which struggled to escape.

A too bitter pain oppressed the heart of the wretched girl. What had she done to that cruel stranger, to lead her to reveal the secret which ruined her whole life? Alas! Since Ordener's full name had been made known to her, the poor child had been unable to close her eyes in slumber, or to find rest for her soul. Night brought her no other relief than freedom to weep as she chose. And so it was all over! he was not for her — he who was bound to her by all her memories, by all her sorrow, and by all her prayers — he whose wife she had believed herself to be on the strength of her dreams; for that evening when Ordener had clasped her so fondly in his arms was naught but a dream to her now. A sweet dream it was, to be sure, and one which she had dreamed again every night since then. And henceforth it was a guilty affection which, try as she might to uproot it, she still felt for this absent friend. Herr Ordener was betrothed to another! Who can say what anguish tore that maiden heart when the strange, unfamiliar sentiment of jealousy crept in like a viper, — when she tossed about during the long, sleepless hours upon her burning bed, imagining that her Ordener was at that very moment perhaps in the arms of another woman, more beautiful than she, and wealthier and of higher station?

"For," she would say to herself, "I was foolish indeed to believe that he set out to defy death for my sake. Ordener is the son of a viceroy, a power-

ful nobleman, and I am only a poor prisoner, — only the despised child of an outcast. He is free, and he left me! — left me, doubtless, to marry his beautiful fiancée, the daughter of a chancellor, a minister, a haughty noble! And so I must believe that my Ordener deceived me? Oh! God! who would have said that that voice could deceive?”

And poor, unhappy Ethel wept and wept, and in her imagination saw Ordener, whom she had worshipped as a god, Ordener arrayed in the magnificent attire befitting his rank, walking up to the altar amid festal surroundings, and turning to that other with the smile which was once her greatest joy.

And yet, in the depths of her inexpressible desolation, she never for one moment forgot her duty to her father. The poor girl made the most heroic efforts to conceal her misery from him; for the most grievous part of grief is to suppress its exterior manifestation; and the tears that one swallows are much more bitter than those that are shed. It required several days for the taciturn old man to observe the change in his daughter, and the almost affectionate questions which he addressed to her at last opened the flood-gates, and let the tears gush forth which had been too long dammed up in her heart.

For some moments the father watched his daughter weep, shaking his head with a bitter smile.

“Ethel,” he said at last, “why do you weep? — you do not live among men.”

Before he had finished the question the lovely girl arose. By some power she had checked her tears, and was wiping her eyes with her scarf.

"Father," she said earnestly, "my lord and father, forgive me ; I was weak for a moment."

She looked up into his face, and forced herself to smile. She went to another part of the room to fetch the Edda, sat down beside her silent father, and opened the book at random. With a violent effort to control her voice she began to read, but what she read was not heard by the old man or understood by herself.

"Enough, enough, my daughter," said Schumacker, raising his hand.

She closed the book.

"Ethel," he added, "do you still think sometimes of Ordener ?"

Ethel trembled, and was visibly embarrassed.

"Yes," he went on, "of Ordener, I mean, who left us —"

"My lord and father," Ethel interposed, "why concern ourselves about him ? I believe, as you do, that he left us never to return."

"Never to return, my child ? I could never have said that. On the other hand, I have a presentiment that he will return."

"You thought not so, my noble father, when you spoke so distrustfully of the youth."

"Did I speak distrustfully of him ?"

"Indeed, yes, father ; and I am of your opinion in that regard ; I think that he deceived us."

"Deceived us, my child ! If I expressed such an opinion of him, I but acted after the manner of men in condemning without proof. I received naught from this Ordener but proofs of unselfish devotion."

"But do you know, father, whether his cordial words were not a cloak for treacherous thoughts?"

"Ordinarily, men do not seek the society of the unfortunate and disgraced. If Ordener had not been attached to me he would not have come to my prison without an object."

"Are you sure," faltered Ethel, "that he had no object in coming hither?"

"What could it have been?" asked the old man.

Ethel made no reply. It required too great an effort to continue to accuse the beloved Ordener, whom she once defended against her father.

"I am no longer the Count von Griffenfeld," the old man continued; "I am no longer the Grand Chancellor of Denmark and Norway, the dispenser of royal favors, the all-powerful minister. I am a wretched prisoner of state, a proscribed, pestilential politician. It requires courage even to mention my name without an execration to those whom I once loaded with honors and wealth; it requires deep devotion to cross the threshold of this dungeon, unless one is the jailer or the hangman; it requires downright heroism, my child, to cross it as my friend. No, I will not be ungrateful like the rest of mankind. This young man had earned my gratitude, even though he had done nothing else than show me a kindly face, and speak to me in an encouraging and consoling voice."

It cost Ethel a bitter pang to listen to this language, which would have delighted her beyond measure a few days earlier, when Ordener was still in her heart her own Ordener.

"Listen, my child," the old man continued solemnly, after a brief pause; "for what I am about to say is of the deepest moment. I feel that I am slowly wasting away; life is gradually slipping away from me; yes, my daughter, my end is near."

Ethel interrupted him with a stifled moan:—

"Oh! God! father, say not so! in mercy's name, spare your poor daughter! Alas! do you, too, wish to abandon her? What will become of her, when your protecting arm is removed, and she is left alone in the world?"

"The protecting arm of a proscribed outcast!" exclaimed her father, with an energetic shake of the head. "However, it was of that I was thinking. Yes, your future welfare engrosses my thoughts more than my own misfortunes in the past. So listen to me, I pray you, and do not interrupt me again. Ordener does not deserve such severe judgment at your hands, my child, and I have always supposed that you had no such feeling of aversion for him. His demeanor is frank and noble; that proves nothing, it is true, but I must say that he seemed to me to be not altogether devoid of good qualities, although the mere fact that he possesses a man's heart makes it possible that it may contain the germ of every vice and every crime. Every fire produces some smoke."

The old man paused again for a moment, then added, gazing into his daughter's face:—

"As I have been unmistakably warned that my death is imminent, I have thought much upon him and upon you, Ethel; and if he returns, as I hope

he will, I give him to you for your protector and your husband."

Ethel trembled and turned pale ; the very moment when her dream had taken flight forever was selected by her father for an attempt to realize it. The bitter thought, "I might after all have been happy!" renewed the violence of her despair. She stood for a moment without speaking, trying to keep back the hot tears which rose to her eyes.

Her father waited.

"What!" she said at last, almost inaudibly, "you propose him for my husband, my lord and father, without knowing his rank, his family, or his name?"

"I did not formerly propose him for your husband, but I do propose him now."

The old man's tone was almost imperious. Ethel sighed.

"I do now propose him for your husband, I say ; and what matters his birth? I have no need to know his family since I know him. Consider that he is the only anchor that is left you. I am glad to believe that he has n't the same repugnance for you that you have for him."

The unhappy girl raised her eyes imploringly to heaven.

"You understand me, Ethel ; I say again, what care I for his rank? It is doubtless obscure, for they who are born in palaces are not given to frequenting prisons. But harbor no vain regrets, my child ; do not forget that Ethel Schumacker has ceased to be Princess of Wollin and Countess of Tongsberg ; you have sunk lower than the level

whence your father started upward. Be satisfied, therefore, if this man accepts your hand, whatever his station. If he is of humble origin, so much the better, my child ; your life will at least be out of reach of the tempests which have wrecked your father's. Under some little-known name, far from the envy and hatred of mankind, you will live out a modest life, very different from mine, for it will end more happily than it began."

Ethel fell on her knees at the prisoner's feet.

"Oh, father ! for pity's sake !"

He threw up his arms in amazement.

"What do you mean, my child ?"

"In the name of Heaven, do not describe that blissful state to me, for it is not to be mine."

"Ethel," said the old man, sternly, "do not trifle with your whole life. I refused the hand of a princess of royal blood, a princess of Holstein-Augustenburg, do you understand ? And my pride was cruelly punished. You disdain the hand of an obscure but loyal man ; tremble lest your punishment be as cruel."

"Would to God," murmured Ethel, "that he was an obscure and loyal man !"

The old man began to pace excitedly up and down the room.

"My child," he said, "your poor father entreats you, commands you, to do this thing. Do not leave me in uncertainty as to your future when I die ; promise me to take this stranger for your husband."

"I will obey you in everything, father, dear, but do not look for his return."

"I have weighed the probabilities, and I believe,

from the tone in which Ordener uttered your name —”

“That he loves me!” interjected Ethel, bitterly.
“Oh, no, do not think it!”

“I am unable to say,” replied her father, coldly,
“whether, to employ your girlish expression, he loves you; but I know that he will return.”

“Renounce the thought, my noble father. In any event, it may be that you would not wish him for your son-in-law, if you knew him.”

“He shall be, Ethel, whatever his name and his rank.”

“But suppose,” she rejoined, “that this youth, in whom you found a comforter, and in whom you propose to find a protector for your daughter, my lord and father, should prove to be the son of one of your mortal enemies, Count Guldenlew, the Viceroy of Norway?”

Schumacker started back.

“Great God! what do you say? Ordener! — that is not possible!”

The expression of unspeakable hatred which glared in the dull eyes of the old man froze Ethel’s trembling heart, and she bitterly repented her rash words.

But the shaft had sped. Schumacker stood for some moments motionless, with folded arms; suddenly his whole frame quivered as if it were stretched upon a red-hot gridiron; his flaming eyes started from their sockets, and seemed to be trying to pierce the stone flags upon which they were fixed. At last a few disjointed words issued from his lips, in a voice as weak as that of a man talking in a dream.

“Ordener!—yes, Ordener Guldenlew! Very good! Bah! Schumacker, old madman, open your arms in God’s name to this loyal young man, who comes to murder you!”

Suddenly he stamped vehemently upon the floor, and shouted in thunder-tones:—

“So they have sent all their accursed race to mock at me in my disgrace and my captivity! I had already seen a Von Ahlefeld; I was near smiling upon a Guldenlew! The monsters! Who could have believed of this Ordener that he bore such a heart and such a name? Woe to me! woe to him!”

He sank, exhausted, into his arm-chair, and while his oppressed bosom sought relief in long-drawn, shuddering sighs, poor Ethel, trembling with alarm, was weeping at his feet.

“Weep not, my daughter,” he said, gloomily, “but come, oh! come to my heart.”

He embraced her; and while Ethel was seeking an explanation of this caress, bestowed upon her in a moment of frenzy, he continued:—

“You were more clear-sighted than your old father, girl. You were not deceived by the serpent with the mild but venomous eyes. Come, and let me thank you for the hatred you express for this accursed Ordener!”

She shuddered at this praise, which she so little deserved, alas!

“My lord and father,” she said, “pray, be calm.”

“Promise me that you will always retain the same feeling for Guldenlew’s son; swear it!”

“God forbids an oath, dear father.”

“Swear it, girl!” repeated Schumacker, vehemently. “Will you not always retain your present feeling for this Ordener Guldenlew?”

Ethel had no difficulty in answering, “Always!”

The old man drew her to him again.

“It is well, my child! I bequeath to you my hatred for them, if I cannot bequeath the honors and the wealth they have stolen from me. Hark ye, girl; they deprived your old father of his rank and his renown, they dragged him from the scaffold in chains, as if to defile him with every variety of infamy by subjecting him to every variety of torture. The wretches! And to think that it is to me that they are indebted for the power which they turned against me! Oh! may heaven and hell hear me, and may they be cursed in their own lives, and cursed in their posterity!”

He was silent for a moment; then he went on, again embracing his daughter, who was terrified by his imprecations:—

“But do you, my Ethel, you, who are my only glory and my only treasure, tell me how it happened that your instinct was keener than mine. How did you discover that this traitor bore the abhorred name which is written in gall at the bottom of my heart? How did you penetrate his secret?”

She was summoning all her strength of will to enable her to respond, when the door was opened.

A man dressed in black, with an ebony staff in his hand, and a chain of burnished steel around his neck, appeared upon the threshold, supported by a number of halberdiers, also dressed in black.

“What do you want with me?” demanded the astonished prisoner, sharply. The man did not look at him, and vouchsafed no reply to his question, but unrolled a long parchment, to which a large green seal was attached by silk thread, and read in a loud voice:—

“In the name of his Majesty, our gracious sovereign and lord, Christian King:—

“Schumacker, prisoner of state, confined in the royal fortress of Munckholm, and his daughter, are ordered to follow the bearer of these presents.”

Schumacker repeated his question:—

“What do you want with me?”

The man in black, with unmoved countenance, began dutifully to read the document again.

“Enough!” said the old man.

He rose and motioned to Ethel, who was looking on with mingled wonder and alarm, to go with him wherever their funereal escort were ordered to conduct them.

XLI.

A doleful signal is given, and a subservient minister of the law knocks at his door, and informs him that his presence is required.

JOSEPH DE MAISTRE.

NIGHT had fallen ; a cold wind was blowing around the Accursed Tower, and the doors of the ruin of Vyglā trembled upon their hinges, as if the same hand were shaking all of them at once.

The uncanny occupants of the tower, the hangman and his family, were assembled around a blazing fire in the centre of the apartment on the first floor, and the reddish light cast fitful gleams upon their forbidding countenances and their scarlet clothing. There was in the features of the children something like a faint copy of the ferocious smile of their father and the haggard expression of their mother. Their eyes, as well as Bēchlie's, were fastened upon Orugix, who was sitting upon a wooden stool, apparently recovering his breath ; and his dust-covered boots indicated that he had just returned from some distant expedition.

“ Listen, wife, and you, too, children : I have not stayed away two whole days to bring you bad news at last. If I am not royal executioner within a month, I wish I may never know how to tie a slip-knot or wield an axe. Rejoice with me, my little

wolf's-cubs; perhaps your father will bequeath to you the scaffold at Copenhagen itself."

"Pray, what has happened, Nychol?" queried Bechlie.

"And do you rejoice, too, my old Bohemian," added Nychol, with his heavy laugh; "you can buy blue glass necklaces to adorn your stork's-neck. Our contract will soon expire; but a month from now, when you see me executioner-in-chief of the two kingdoms, you won't refuse to break another jug with me, will you?"

"What is it, father; what has happened?" the children asked in chorus; the elder was playing with a blood-stained chevalet, while the younger was amusing himself by plucking the feathers from a living bird, which he had stolen from its mother in the nest.

"What is it, children? — For Heaven's sake, kill that bird, Haspar; he cries like a dull saw; and besides, you mustn't be cruel. Kill him. What has happened? Oh! nothing, — nothing at all, Dame Bechlie, except that within a week ex-Chancellor Schumacker, who saw me at such close quarters at Copenhagen, and the notorious brigand Hans of Klipstadur, are very likely to require my services at the same time."

The woman's listless eye became bright with interest and wonder.

"Schumacker! Hans of Iceland! — how does it happen, Nychol?"

"It's like this. Yesterday morning at the Bridge of Ordals, on the Skongen road, I met the whole

regiment of arquebusiers from Munckholm returning to Drontheim with a very triumphant air. I questioned one of the soldiers, who condescended to reply, doubtless because he didn't know why my jacket and cart are red. I learned that the arquebusiers were returning from the gorge of the Black Pillar, where they had made short work of certain bands of brigands, that is to say, insurgent miners. Now, you know, Bechlie the Bohemian, that these fellows took up arms in behalf of Schumacker, and were commanded by Hans of Iceland. You know that this uprising, in the case of Hans of Iceland, constitutes the crime of insurrection against the royal authority, and in Schumacker's case the very choice little crime of high treason ; which will quite naturally bring both of these honorable gentlemen to the gallows, or the block. Add to these two glorious executions, which cannot fail to be worth at least fifteen gold ducats each to me and to reflect great honor upon me throughout the two kingdoms, some others, of less account, to be sure — ”

“ Why, do you mean to say that Hans of Iceland was taken ? ” interposed Bechlie.

“ Why do you interrupt your lord and master, child of perdition ? ” said the hangman. “ Yes, the renowned, the unconquerable Hans of Iceland is certainly a prisoner, with certain other leaders, his lieutenants, who will also bring me in twelve crowns a head, to say nothing of what I may get for the corpses. He was taken, I tell you, and, if I must gratify your curiosity to the utmost, I saw him marching between the ranks.”

“What! you saw him, father?” cried the children, as they with their mother drew closer to Nychol’s side.

“Hold your tongues, children! You whine like a rascal claiming to be innocent. I saw him. He’s a sort of giant; he was walking with his arms manacled behind his back, and a bandage around his forehead. But he need have no fear; before long I will cure him of his wound.”

Having emphasized this ghastly speech with a ghastlier gesture, the executioner continued:—

“There were four of his companions behind him, also prisoners, also wounded, and all on their way to Drontheim, where they will be tried with ex-Grand-Chancellor Schumacker by a tribunal in which the chief syndic will have a seat, under the presidency of the present grand chancellor.”

“Father, what sort of men were the other prisoners?”

“The first two were old men, one of them in a miner’s felt hat, and the other in a mountaineer’s cap. They both seemed in the depths of despair. One of the others was a young miner, who marched with head erect, whistling; the other— Do you remember, Bechlie, you damned hag, the travellers who came to the tower some ten days ago, on the night of the terrible storm?”

“As Satan remembers the day of his fall,” the woman replied.

“Did you notice among them the young man who was with that old fool of a pedant with the huge wig,—a young man, I say, in a full green cloak, with a cap with a black feather on his head?”

“It is as if he were standing there before my eyes, saying : —

“ ‘ Woman, we have money. ’ ”

“ Well, old woman, I wish I may never strangle aught but heather fowl, if the fourth prisoner was not that same young man. To be sure, his face was entirely hidden from me by his feather, his cap, his hair, and his cloak ; and in addition to that, his head was down on his chest. But it was the same cloak, the same boots, and the same bearing. I will swallow the stone gibbet at Skongen at a mouthful if it was n't the same man ! What do you say to that, Bechlie ? Is n't it a pleasant conceit that after receiving from me the wherewithal to sustain life, this stranger should also receive from my hands the wherewithal to shorten it ; and that he should have a taste of my dexterity after receiving my hospitality ? ”

The executioner indulged in a prolonged burst of his horrible laughter, before he continued : —

“ Come, rejoice all of you, and let us have a drink. Yes, Bechlie, give me a glass of that beer which scrapes the throat as if one were drinking files, so that I may empty it to my future advancement. Come, honor and health to Herr Nychol Orugix, royal executioner that is to be ! I confess, you old sinner, that I had hard work to make up my mind to go to the hamlet of Noes, to hang some commonplace cabbage and chiccory thief. However, on reflection it occurred to me that thirty-two ascalins were not to be despised as yet, and that my hands would not be polluted by executing vulgar thieves and other riff-raff of that sort, until they had be-

headed the noble count, the ex-grand-chancellor, and the famous demon of Iceland. So I resigned myself to work off the poor wretch at Noës, pending my diploma as executioner royal ; and here," he added, taking a leather purse from his haversack, "are the thirty-two ascalins I earned, old woman."

At that moment they heard the blast of a horn thrice repeated outside the tower.

"Wife," cried Orugix, springing to his feet, "it's the chief syndic's archers!" and he rushed down to the door in hot haste.

A moment later he reappeared with a roll of parchment, the seal of which he had broken.

"Look at what the chief syndic has sent me," he said to his wife. "Decipher it for me, you, for I believe you could read Satan's conjuring book. Perhaps it's my patent of promotion already ; for since the court is to have a grand chancellor for president and a grand chancellor for defendant, it would be proper that the executioner who is to execute its sentence should bear a royal commission."

The woman took the document, and after taking some time to look it over, read aloud what follows, while the children sat gazing stupidly at her : —

"In the name of the Chief Syndic of Drontheimhus! Nychol Orugix, executioner of the province, is ordered to repair at once to Drontheim, provided with the axe of honor, the block, and black hangings."

"Is that all?" demanded Nychol, discontentedly.

"That is all," Bechlie answered.

"Executioner of the province!" he muttered between his teeth.

He stood for a moment glaring wrathfully at the parchment.

“Well,” he said at last, “I must needs obey and be off. I notice that they call for the axe of honor and the black hangings. You must be careful, Bechlie, to scour off every speck of rust on the axe, and to see if the hangings are not stained in several places. I must not be discouraged; perhaps they mean to give me my promotion by way of pay for this glorious job. So much the worse for the sufferers, for they will not have the honor of being put to death by an executioner royal.”

XLII.

Elvire. What has become of poor Sancho ? He has n't appeared in the town.

Nuno. Sancho will have known how to keep himself out of sight. — LOPE DE VEGA : *The Best Alcalde is the King.*

THE Count von Ahlefeld, with the folds of an ample black satin gown lined with ermine trailing behind him, his head and shoulders covered by a huge judicial wig, and with divers stars and decorations on his chest, among which could be seen the collars of the royal orders of the Elephant and Dannebrog, — arrayed, in a word, in the full official garb of Grand-Chancellor of Denmark and Norway, — was walking thoughtfully back and forth in the apartment of the Countess von Ahlefeld, the two being alone at the moment.

“Come, it is nine o'clock, and the sitting of the tribunal is about to begin ; it must not be delayed, for it is essential that the sentence be pronounced during the night, so that it may be carried out to-morrow morning at the latest. The chief syndic assures me that the hangman will be here before dawn. Elphega, have you given orders for a boat to be in readiness to take me to Munckholm ? ”

“It has been waiting for you at least a half-hour, my lord,” the countess replied, sitting up in her chair.

“And is my litter at the door?”

“Yes, my lord.”

“’Tis well! So you say, Elphega,” continued the count, striking his forehead, “that there is a love affair between Ordener Guldenlew and Schumacker’s daughter?”

“A very desperate one, I assure you,” replied the countess, with an angry, disdainful smile.

“Who would have imagined such a thing? And yet I assure you that I more than suspected it.”

“And so did I. It’s a trick that infamous Levin has played us.”

“The old villain of a Mecklemburger!” muttered the chancellor; “ah, I will commend him to Arensdorf’s attention. If I could only succeed in effecting his disgrace! But listen a moment, Elphega, pray; here is a ray of light.”

“What is it?”

“You know that the persons we are about to try at Munckholm are six in number: Schumacker, whom I trust I shall have no further reason to fear at this hour to-morrow; the colossal mountaineer, our false Hans of Iceland, who has sworn to play his part to the end, in the hope that Musdœmon, from whom he has already received large sums, will help him to escape — By the way, that Musdœmon does have truly diabolical ideas! The other four accused are the three leaders of the rebels, and an unknown, who dropped down, no one knows how, into the meeting at Apsyl-Corh, and whom Musdœmon’s precautions caused to fall into our hands. Musdœmon believes that the fellow is a spy of Levin von Knud.

And, indeed, when he reached here as a prisoner, his first word was an inquiry for the general, and when he learned of the Mecklenburger's absence he seemed dumfounded. He refused to reply to any of Musdœmon's questions."

"My dear lord," the countess interposed, "why did you not question him yourself?"

"Really, Elphega, how could I, with all the duties that have crowded upon me since my arrival? I turned this matter over to Musdœmon, who is as deeply interested in it as I am. Besides, my dear, this man is of no importance in himself; he's merely some worthless vagabond. We can make no use of him, except by putting him forward as an agent of Levin von Knud; and, as he was taken in the ranks of the rebels, that may establish a guilty connection between Schumacker and the Mecklenburger, which will be enough to bring about the villain's disgrace, if it does not lead to charges being preferred against him."

The countess seemed to meditate for a moment.

"You are right, my lord. But what about this fatal passion of Baron Thorvick's for Ethel Schumacker?"

The chancellor rubbed his head vigorously; then suddenly began, with a shrug of the shoulders:—

"Hark ye, Elphega; neither of us is what could be called a novice in life, and yet we do not know men! When Schumacker has been a second time branded by a conviction of high treason, when he has undergone an infamous punishment on the scaffold, when his daughter, cast down below the low-

est orders of society is defiled forever in the public eye with all her father's shame, do you suppose that Ordener Guldenlew will then remember for an instant his boyish fancy, which you call a passion, judging it from the exalted rhapsodies of a foolish young prisoner, — or that he will hesitate a single day between the dishonored daughter of a miserable criminal, and the illustrious daughter of a distinguished chancellor? We must judge men by ourselves, my dear; when did you ever know a human heart to be so constituted?"

"I hope that you are still right. You do not consider the request I made to the syndic a foolish one, do you, — that Ethel Schumacker should be present at her father's trial, and have a seat in the same gallery with me? I am curious to study the creature."

"Whatever may throw any light on the affair is worth trying," said the chancellor, indifferently. "But tell me this: does any one know where Ordener is at this moment?"

"No one in the world knows; he is a worthy pupil of old Levin, another knight-errant like him. I believe that he is now visiting Ward-hus."

"Well, well, our Ulrica will attend to him. Come, I forgot that the court awaits my coming."

"One word more, my lord," said the countess, detaining him. "I spoke to you yesterday, but your mind was on something else, and I could get no answer. Where is my Frederic?"

"Frederic!" exclaimed the count dejectedly, passing his hand across his face.

"Yes, answer me; where is my Frederic? His

regiment has returned to Drontheim without him. Swear to me that he was not in that frightful gorge of the Black Pillar. Why does your face change at the name of Frederic? I am in mortal terror."

The chancellor's countenance resumed its impassible expression.

"Calm your fears, Elphega. I swear that he was not in the gorge of the Black Pillar. The list of the officers killed or wounded in that affair has been published, you know."

"Yes," said the countess, more calmly, "you reassure me. Two officers only were killed: Captain Lory, and young Baron Randmer who cut so many capers with poor Frederic at the balls at Copenhagen. Oh! I have read and re-read the list, my lord, I promise you. But tell me, pray, did my son remain at Wahlstrom?"

"Yes, he did," was the count's reply.

"Very well, then, my dear," said the countess, with a smile which she strove hard to make affectionate, "I have but one favor to ask you, and that is to order Frederic back from that dreadful country at once."

The chancellor extricated himself with difficulty from her imploring arms.

"Madame," he said, "the court awaits my coming. Adieu! what you ask is not in my power to grant."

And he abruptly left the room.

The countess became very sad and thoughtful.

"Not in his power!" she said; "why, a word from him would bring my son back to me! I have always thought that that man was thoroughly bad."

XLIII.

Is a man in my position to be treated thus? Is the respect due to justice to be thus disregarded? — CALDERON: *Luis Perez of Galicia*.

ETHEL, who was compelled by the guards to part from her father when they left the keep of the Lion of Schleswig, was taken; trembling with apprehension, through a succession of dark corridors, entirely unfamiliar to her, to a gloomy cell, the door of which was closed upon her. In the wall of the cell opposite the door was a large barred opening, through which she could see the glare of torches. A woman, closely veiled and dressed in black, was sitting on a bench in front of this opening, and made Ethel a sign to sit beside her. She obeyed in terror-stricken silence.

She glanced out between the bars. A sombre, but imposing picture was before her eyes.

At the end of a hall hung with black drapery, and but dimly lighted by copper lamps hanging from the ceiling, was a bench in the shape of a horseshoe, occupied by seven black-gowned judges, one of whom sat in the centre on a seat slightly higher than the others, with diamond chains and gold medals glistening upon his breast. The judge who sat at the president's right was distinguished from

the others by a white girdle and an ermine mantle, the insignia of the chief syndic of the province.

At the right of the bench was a platform covered with a canopy, whereon sat an elderly man in priestly garb ; at the left was a table covered with papers, behind which stood a short man with an enormous wig, lost in the ample folds of a long black cloak.

Facing the judges was a wooden bench surrounded by halberdiers carrying torches ; the light gleamed upon a forest of pikes, muskets, and halberds, and flickered uncertainly over the heads of a restless crowd of spectators, who were pressed close against the grating which separated them from the court.

Ethel gazed at this spectacle as if she were watching with open eyes the progress of a dream ; and yet she was very far from feeling indifferent to what was taking place under her eyes. She heard a still, small voice within her, warning her to pay close attention because one of the crises of her life was at hand. Her heart was torn by two different emotions at the same moment ; she would have been glad to learn at once how she was interested in the scene at which she was gazing, or else to learn it never. For several days the conviction that Ordener was lost to her had inspired a desperate longing to be done forever with life, and to read at a glance all that was written in the book of her destiny. For that reason, realizing that the hour which was to decide her fate was at hand, she contemplated the gloomy scene before her, not so much with repugnance, as with a sort of ghastly and impatient joy.

She saw the president rise to proclaim, in the

king's name, that the session of the court had begun.

She heard the little man in black, stationed at the left of the bench, read rapidly, in a low voice, a long harangue, in which her father's name occurred again and again, mingled with the words *conspiracy*, *miners' revolt*, and *high treason*. Then she remembered what the odious stranger said to her in the garden of the donjon, as to the accusation with which her father was threatened; and she shuddered when the man in the black gown brought his speech to a close with the word "death" pronounced with great emphasis.

She turned in terror to the veiled woman, who inspired an inexplicable feeling of alarm in her heart.

"Where are we? What is the meaning of all this?" she asked hesitatingly.

A gesture on the part of her mysterious companion enjoined silence and attention upon her, and she turned her eyes back into the court-room.

The venerable man in priestly garb had just risen; and Ethel heard these words fall from his lips in a tone of great distinctness:—

"In the name of God, the Almighty and Merciful, — I, Pamphilus Eleuthera, Bishop of the royal city of Drontheim, and the royal province of Drontheimhus, bow before the worshipful tribunal, which gives judgment in the name of the king, our lord next after God;

"And I say that, having observed that the prisoners now brought before the tribunal are men and Christians, and that they have no defenders, I

hereby announce to your Honors my purpose to furnish them such feeble assistance as lies in my power, in the painful position in which Heaven has chosen to place them, — praying God to give me strength in my weakness, and light in my utter blindness.

“Thus do I, bishop of this royal diocese, salute this learned and worshipful tribunal.”

Having thus spoken, the bishop stepped down from his platform and took his seat upon the wooden bench set apart for the accused, while a murmur of approval passed from mouth to mouth among the people.

The president rose and said in a harsh voice : —

“Halberdiers, enforce silence! My lord bishop, the court thanks your Reverence in the name of the prisoners. Citizens of Drontheim, give ear to the words of the king’s lords justices; this court is to hear and judge without appeal. Archers, bring in the accused.”

The deathlike silence of anxious expectation prevailed throughout the hall; but all heads were moving wildly about in the dim light like the angry waves of a storm-tossed sea over which the thunder is soon to roar.

Soon Ethel heard a dull murmuring below her, and there was a great commotion in the dark recesses of the hall. The spectators moved aside with a thrill of impatient curiosity; the tramp of many feet rang out on the stones; halberds and muskets gleamed; and six men, loaded with chains and surrounded by guards made their way through the crowd into the

presence of the tribunal. Ethel saw only the first of the six prisoners, — an aged, white-bearded man in a black gown ; it was her father.

She leaned almost fainting upon the stone balustrade in front of her bench ; everything went round and round before her eyes as in a cloud, and it seemed as if her heart were beating in her ears.

“ O God, help me ! ” she exclaimed, in a feeble voice.

The veiled woman leaned toward her, and gave her salts to inhale, which roused her from her half-swoon.

“ Madame,” she said with more animation, “ in pity’s name let me hear a word from your lips to convince me that I am not being mocked at by spirits from hell.”

But the stranger, deaf to her entreaty, had turned her eyes back to the court-room, and poor Ethel, who had recovered her strength in a measure, resigned herself to do the same in silence.

Once more the president rose and said in a slow, solemn voice : —

“ Prisoners, you have been brought before us that we may make inquiry whether you are guilty of high treason, conspiracy, and armed insurrection against the authority of the king, our sovereign lord. Search your consciences, for a charge of *lèse-majesté* in the first degree is hanging over your heads.”

At that moment a ray of light fell upon the face of one of the six, a young man whose head was bent forward upon his chest, as if to conceal his features with his long, curling hair. Ethel started, and her

whole body was bathed in cold perspiration ; she thought that she recognized — But no, it was a cruel delusion ; the hall was dimly lighted, and the men were moving around like shadows. It was hard to distinguish even the large figure of Christ in polished ebony above the president's arm-chair.

And yet this young man was enveloped in a cloak which looked green at a distance, his dishevelled hair had a tinge of chestnut, and the sudden light which fell upon his features — But no, it was not, it could not be ! it was a horrible delusion.

The prisoners took their seats upon the bench where the bishop had taken his. Schumacker was at one end, separated from the youth with the chestnut hair by his four companions in misfortune, who were coarsely dressed, and among whom was a sort of giant. The bishop was at the other end of the bench.

Ethel saw the president turn toward her father.

"Old man," he said, harshly, "tell us your name, and who you are."

The old man raised his venerable, snow-white head.

"Formerly," he answered, meeting the president's gaze, "I was called Count von Griffenfeld and Tongsberg, Prince of Wollin, Prince of the Holy Empire, Knight of the Royal Order of the Elephant, Knight of the Royal Order of Dannebrog, Knight of the Golden Fleece in Germany, and of the Garter in England, Prime Minister, Inspector-General of Universities, Grand Chancellor of Denmark and Norway —"

The president interrupted him.

"Prisoner, the court does not inquire what you were called, nor what you have been, but what you are now called, and what you now are."

"Very well," retorted the old man quickly, "my name is now John Schumacker, I am sixty-nine years old, and I am nothing, except your former benefactor, Chancellor von Ahlefeld."

The president was visibly abashed.

"I recognize you, Herr Count," added the ex-chancellor, "and as it seems very clear to me that the recognition is not mutual, I take the liberty to remind your Grace that we are old acquaintances."

"Schumacker," retorted the president in a tone indicative of restrained wrath, "do not waste the time of the court."

"We have changed places, noble chancellor," the old prisoner interposed; "formerly I called you 'Ahlefeld' simply, and you addressed me as 'Herr Count.'"

"Prisoner," said the president, "you injure your cause by recalling the infamous sentence which has already been passed upon you."

"If the sentence was infamous for any one, Count von Ahlefeld, it was not for me."

The old man half rose from his seat to give the greater force to his words. The president put out his hand.

"Be seated. Do not insult, in this presence, the judges who sentenced you, as well as the king who made them your judges. Remember that his Majesty deigned to grant you your life, and confine yourself now to defending yourself."

Schumacker made no other reply than a disdainful shrug.

“Have you?” the president asked, “any confession to make concerning the capital offence of which you are accused?”

As Schumacker did not reply, the president repeated the question.

“Are you speaking to me?” said the ex-chancellor. “I supposed, noble Count von Ahlefeld, that you were speaking to yourself. What crime do you refer to? Am I accused of having given a Judas kiss to a friend? Did I ever imprison, condemn, and dishonor a benefactor, or despoil the man to whom I owed my all? In very truth, Herr Chancellor, I have no idea why I am brought here. It must be to judge of the dexterity with which you cause innocent heads to fall. In good sooth, I shall not be sorry to see if you can succeed in ruining me as effectually as you are ruining the kingdom, and if a comma will suffice to cause my death, as a single letter of the alphabet sufficed to provoke a war with Sweden.”¹

As soon as he had finished this bitter speech the

¹ There were very serious grounds of quarrel between Denmark and Sweden because Count von Ahlefeld, in negotiating a treaty between the two States, demanded that the King of Denmark should have the title of *Rex Gothorum*, which seemed to admit his sovereignty over the Swedish province, Gothland, while the Swedes were willing to consent to his assumption of the title of *Rex Gotorum*, — a vague distinction, equivalent to the old-time title of the Danish monarchs, *King of the Gots*.

It was to this *h* doubtless, which was the cause, not of a war, but of protracted and stormy negotiations, that Schumacker alluded.

man who was standing at the table at the left of the bench addressed the court.

"My lord president," he said, after making a profound obeisance, "and lords justices, I demand that John Schumacker be forbidden to speak, if he continues thus to insult his Grace the president of this worshipful court."

"Herr Secretary," said the bishop's calm voice, "an accused person may not be forbidden to speak."

"You are right, my lord bishop," cried the president, hastily. "It is our purpose to accord the defence the greatest possible latitude. I recommend the accused to moderate his language, however, if he has his own interest at heart."

Schumacker shook his head.

"It would seem that Count von Ahlefeld is more certain of his facts than in 1677," he said coldly.

"Hold your peace," said the president, and turning at once to the prisoner next to the old man, demanded his name.

He was a mountaineer of enormous height, with his head tied up in bandages.

"I am Hans of Klipstadur in Iceland," he said, as he stood up.

A shiver of fright ran through the crowd, and Schumacker, raising his head, which had already fallen forward upon his breast, looked sharply at his formidable neighbor, from whom the other prisoners kept as far away as possible.

"Hans of Iceland," said the president, when the commotion had subsided, "what have you say to the court?"

Of all the spectators, Ethel was not the least impressed by the presence of the famous brigand, who had been so long a prominent figure in all her fears. She gazed with timid eagerness at the monstrous giant with whom her Ordener had fought perhaps, and to whom it was very likely that he had fallen a victim. This idea kept forcing itself upon her mind in every conceivable agonizing form. She was so absorbed in heart-breaking conjectures that she hardly heard the reply, couched in coarse and embarrassed language, which this Hans of Iceland, whom she almost looked upon as her lover's murderer, made to the president's question. She understood no more than that the brigand avowed himself the leader of the rebel forces.

"Did you take command of the insurgents of your own motion, or at the instigation of some other person?" the president asked.

"Not of my own motion," was the reply.

"Who instigated you to commit this crime?"

"A man who called himself Hacket."

"Who was this Hacket?"

"An agent of Schumacker, otherwise called Count von Griffenfeld."

"Schumacker, do you know this Hacket?" said the president.

"You forestalled me, Count von Ahlefeld," the old man retorted; "I was just about to put the same question to you."

"John Schumacker, your hatred is an evil guide. The court will give due weight to the manner of your defence."

At this point the bishop interposed.

"Herr Secretary," he said, turning to the small man who seemed to be performing the functions of clerk and prosecutor, "is this Hacket among my clients?"

"No, your Reverence," was the reply.

"Is it known what has become of him?"

"We could not apprehend him; he has disappeared."

An indifferent listener would have said that the secretary had some difficulty in keeping his voice from trembling.

"I am inclined to believe rather that he was spirited away," said Schumacker.

"Herr Secretary," continued the bishop, "is search being made for this Hacket? Have you his description?"

Before the secretary could reply, one of the prisoners, a young miner with a proud, rugged face, rose from his seat.

"It is very easy to procure it," he said in a strong voice. "This wretched Hacket, Schumacker's agent, is a man below middle height, with an open countenance, open as one of the mouths of hell. Look you, my lord bishop, his voice is very much like the gentleman's who is writing at that table, and whom your Reverence called *Herr Secretary*, I think. Indeed, if the room were not so dark and the worshipful secretary had less hair to hide his face, I should be almost willing to affirm that his features bear some resemblance to those of the traitor Hacket."

"What our brother says is true," cried the two prisoners who sat next the young miner.

"Upon my word!" muttered Schumacker, triumphantly.

Meanwhile the secretary made an involuntary movement, of fear perhaps, or of indignation at being compared to Hacket. The president, who seemed ill at ease himself, made haste to intervene.

"Prisoners, do not forget that you are not to speak except when you are questioned by the court; and above all, do not insult the officers of justice by degrading comparisons."

"But, my lord president," said the bishop, "this is simply a question of description. If the culprit Hacket resembles the secretary in some points, it is well to know that fact."

The president interrupted him. "Hans of Iceland," he said, "you have had much to do with Hacket; tell us, for the satisfaction of the reverend bishop, whether this man does in fact resemble our honored private secretary?"

"Not in the least," replied the giant, unhesitatingly.

"You see, my lord bishop," said the president.

The bishop indicated his satisfaction with a nod, and the president, turning to another of the accused, began with the usual formula: —

"What is your name?"

"Wilfred Kennybol, of the Kole mountains."

"Were you among the insurgents?"

"Yes, my lord; the truth is worth more than life. I was taken in the cursed gorge of the Black Pillar. I was the leader of the mountaineers."

“What induced you to commit this crime of armed rebellion?”

“Our brothers the miners were complaining of the royal guardianship, and that is n't to be wondered at, is it, your Courtesy? If you had naught but a mud-cabin and a pair of wretched fox's-skins, you would not be sorry to be at liberty to do what you pleased with them, would you? The government refused to listen to their petitions. Then, my lord, they determined to rise, and called upon us to assist them. Such a trifling service is not to be refused among brothers who repeat the same prayers, and keep the same holy days. That's all there is to it.”

“Was there no one,” said the president, “who instigated, encouraged, and guided your insurrection?”

“One Herr Hacket, who talked to us incessantly of setting free a certain count, a prisoner at Munkholm, whose envoy he claimed to be. We promised to do it for him, because the liberty of one man more or less cost us nothing.”

“Was not the name of this count Schumacker Griffenfeld?”

“Precisely, your Courtesy.”

“You never saw him?”

“No, my lord; but if he is the old gentleman who rattled off so many names just now, I cannot do otherwise than agree —”

“To what?” the president interrupted him.

“That he has a very beautiful white beard, my lord, almost as fine as that of my sister Maase's husband's father, of the village of Surb, who lived to a hundred and twenty.”

The darkness of the hall made it impossible to see whether the president seemed to be disappointed with the naïve response of the mountaineer. He ordered the archers to unfold certain fiery-red banners which lay on the floor in front of the bench.

"Do you recognize these banners, Wilfred Kennybol?" he said.

"Yes, your Courtesy; they were given us by Hacket in the name of Count Schumacker. The count also sent arms for distribution among the miners; we mountaineers, who live by the carbine and the game-bag, needed none. I myself, my lord, such as you see me, made fast here like a wretched chicken waiting for the spit, I have more than once from the depths of one of our valleys brought down an old eagle soaring so far above me that he looked no larger than a swallow or a thrush."

"You hear, my lords justices," observed the private secretary; "the prisoner Schumacker sent arms and flags to the rebels through Hacket."

"Have you anything further to say, Kennybol," said the president.

"Nothing, your Courtesy, except that I do not deserve death. I did nothing more than lend a hand, like a good comrade, to the miners; and I dare swear that a bullet from my carbine, old hunter as I am, never injured a stag belonging to the king."

The president, without replying to this argument, proceeded to question Kennybol's two companions, the leaders of the miners. The older of the two, who gave his name as Jonas, repeated in different words what Kennybol had said. The other, who was the

young man whose eyes had detected so striking a resemblance between the private secretary and the treacherous Hacket, said that his name was Norbith, proudly avowed his share in the revolt, but refused to reveal anything concerning Hacket and Schumacker. He had sworn to say nothing, he said, and he had forgotten everything except his oath. In vain did the president resort to threats and to entreaty ; the obstinate youth could not be moved. He declared, moreover, that he did not take part in the revolt on Schumacker's account, but because his mother was cold and hungry. He did not deny that he might have incurred the penalty of death, but he insisted that they would be guilty of foul injustice if they condemned him, because when they put him to death they would also kill his poor mother, who had done nothing to deserve it.

When Norbith had said all that he wished to say, the secretary summed up in a few words the evidence, which thus far bore with crushing weight, he claimed, upon the accused, especially upon Schumacker. He read some of the seditious inscriptions upon the banners, and marshalled against the ex-chancellor the unanimous testimony of his accomplices, appealing also to the silence of young Norbith, who had bound himself by an absurd oath.

"There remains," he said in conclusion, "but one prisoner to question, and we have the best of reasons to believe him a secret agent of the official who has but ill guarded the tranquillity of Drontheimhus. This official, if not by guilty connivance, certainly by reprehensible negligence, promoted the explosion of

the revolt, which will result in the death of all these wretches, and give back to the scaffold this Schumacker, whom the king's clemency once so generously rescued therefrom."

Ethel, whose fears for Ordener had vanished for the moment in the face of her no less agonizing fear for her father, shuddered at this ominous language, and a torrent of tears gushed from her eyes, when she saw her father rise, and heard his voice saying calmly : —

"Chancellor von Ahlefeld, I am lost in admiration of your chicanery. Did you have the foresight to send for the hangman?"

The poor girl thought at that moment that she had run through the whole gamut of suffering, but she was mistaken.

The sixth prisoner rose to his feet ; with a noble, haughty gesture he thrust aside the hair which concealed his face, and to the president's questions, he replied in firm, distinct tones : —

"My name is Ordener Guldenlew, Baron von Thorvick, and Knight of Dannebrog."

The secretary uttered a cry of surprise.

"The viceroy's son!"

"The viceroy's son!" arose on all sides, as if the hall had a thousand echoes.

The president fell back upon his chair ; the other judges, who until then had sat like statues, turned excitedly from one to another like trees beaten this way and that by contrary winds. The excitement was even greater among the spectators ; they climbed upon the stone cornices and the iron gratings ; the

whole assemblage was chattering as with one voice, and the guards, neglecting to enforce silence, added their own exclamations of wonder to the general uproar.

Can any heart, however well used to life's sudden emotions, conceive what took place in Ethel's heart? Can any pen describe that indescribable mingling of heart-rending joy and exquisite pain,—that breathless anticipation, which was both dread and hope, and yet was neither? He stood before her, and knew not that she was there! She saw him in the flesh, and he saw her not! It was her beloved Ordener, — her Ordener whom she had believed dead, whom she knew to be lost to her, — her friend who had deceived her, and whom she adored nevertheless more fervently than before. He was there; yes, he was there. It was no cruel, illusory dream; it was really he, Ordener, whom, alas! she had seen much more frequently in dreams than in the flesh.

But did he appear in that fatal spot as a saving angel, or a destroying demon? Ought she to hope in him, or to tremble for him? A thousand wild conjectures crowded into her mind, and stifled her, as too much fuel extinguishes a flame. All the ideas and all the sensations which we have tried to describe flashed through her brain the instant that the son of the Viceroy of Norway pronounced his name. She was the first to recognize him, and before the others recognized him she had fainted.

She soon recovered her senses for the second time, thanks to the attentions of her mysterious neighbor. She opened her eyes, from which the tears had sud-

denly ceased to flow. She darted at the young man, who was standing unmoved amid the general commotion, one of those glances which take in every detail of one's being ; and tranquillity was fully restored on the bench of the judges and among the spectators before the name of Ordener Guldenlew had ceased to ring in her ears. She noticed with pained solicitude that he carried his arm in a sling, and that his hands were loaded with chains ; she noticed that his cloak was torn in several places, and that his trusty sword was no longer at his side. Nothing escaped her anxious scrutiny ; for a sweetheart's eye is like a mother's. She wound her whole soul about him, whom she could not protect with her body ; and, to the shame and glory of love be it said, in that hall which contained her father and her father's persecutors, Ethel saw but one man.

Silence was gradually restored. The president nerved himself to begin the examination of the viceroy's son.

"Herr Baron —" he said in a shaking voice.

"I am not *Herr Baron* here," interposed Ordener, coolly ; "I am plain Ordener Guldenlew, just as he who was Count von Griffenfeld is plain John Schumacker."

For a moment the president was staggered.

"Very well !" he said at last. "Ordener Guldenlew, some wretched accident doubtless has led to your being brought before us. The rebels must have seized you on your travels and compelled you to accompany them ; that is the explanation, no doubt, of your being found in their ranks."

The secretary rose.

"Your Honors," he said, "the mere name of the son of the Viceroy of Norway is an all-sufficient argument in his defence. Our illustrious president has satisfactorily explained his unfortunate arrest among the rebels. The noble prisoner's only fault lay in his not sooner disclosing his identity. We ask that he be instantly set at liberty; we abandon all the charges against him, and regret that he was made to sit upon a bench polluted by the criminal Schumacker and his accomplices."

"Pray, what are you doing?" cried Ordener.

"The secretary abandons the prosecution as against you," said the president.

"He is wrong to do that," retorted Ordener in ringing tones. "I alone should be accused, tried, and condemned here —" He paused a moment before he added, somewhat less firmly, "for I alone am guilty."

"You alone guilty!" cried the president.

"You alone guilty!" echoed the secretary.

There was another outburst of amazement in the audience. Poor Ethel was near fainting again. She did not consider that this avowal of her lover's might save her father. She thought of nothing but the danger of her Ordener.

"Halberdiers, enforce silence!" said the president, taking advantage of the momentary confusion to collect his thoughts and recover his presence of mind.

"Ordener Guldenlew," he continued, "explain yourself."

The young man stood for a moment lost in thought, then sighed heavily, and spoke as follows, in a calm and resigned tone : —

“ Yes, I know that an infamous death will be my portion, and I know that I had an honorable and glorious career within my grasp. But God will read the truth at the bottom of my heart ! — God alone ! I am about to fulfil the highest duty of my whole life ; to it I am about to sacrifice my blood, perhaps my honor ; but I feel that I shall die without remorse or repentance for what I now do. Be not surprised at my words, worshipful judges ; there are mysteries in the human heart and in human destiny which you cannot solve, and which are judged only in heaven. Listen to me, therefore, and act as your consciences dictate toward me after you have absolved these poor fellows, and especially this ill-starred Schumacker, who has already by his long imprisonment atoned for more crimes than one man can commit. Yes, I am guilty, noble judges, and I alone am guilty. Schumacker is innocent ; these other men were simply led astray. The instigator of the miners’ rebellion was myself.”

“ You ! ” the president and the secretary cried in one breath, with an indefinable expression upon their faces.

“ Myself ! and pray interrupt me no more, gentlemen. I am in haste to be done, because when I accuse myself I justify these unfortunate men. It was I who incited the miners in the name of Schumacker ; it was I who furnished the banners for distribution ; it was I who sent the rebels gold and

weapons in the name of the prisoner of Munckholm. Hacket was my agent."

At the mention of Hacket, the secretary made an involuntary gesture of bewilderment.

"I will not take up your time, my lords," Ordener continued. "I was taken among the miners whom I incited to rebellion. I alone am responsible. Now, judge ye. If I have established my own guilt I have necessarily established the innocence of Schumacker and of the poor creatures whom you suppose to be his accomplices."

While he was speaking the young man's eyes were turned upward. Ethel, almost fainting, could scarcely breathe; it seemed to her that Ordener, even while justifying her father, pronounced his name with a very bitter inflection. His harangue astonished and terrified her, nor could she understand it. In all that had transpired she could see nothing clearly but woe and misery.

A similar feeling seemed to weigh upon the president. It was as if he could not believe the words which forced themselves upon his ears. However, he resumed his questions to the viceroy's son:—

"If you are really the only instigator of this rebellion, what was your object?"

"I cannot tell."

Ethel trembled from head to foot when she heard the president say, with some trace of irritation:—

"Had you not an intrigue with Schumacker's daughter?"

Ordener, shackled as he was, stepped forward toward the court, and exclaimed indignantly:—

"Chancellor von Ahlefeld, be content with my life which I place in your hands, and respect the virtue of an innocent, noble-hearted girl. Do not try a second time to dishonor her."

Poor Ethel, who felt the blood mounting to her cheeks, did not understand the meaning of the words *a second time*, upon which her champion leaned with most significant emphasis; but it was easy to see by the angry flush which overspread the features of the president that he understood them.

"Ordener Guldenlew, do not you forget the respect which you owe to the king's justice, and its highest exponents. In the name of this tribunal, I reprimand you. And now I call upon you once more to say with what object you committed the crime of which you accuse yourself."

"I say again that I cannot tell you."

"Was it not to set Schumacker free?" suggested the secretary.

Ordener made no reply.

"Be not dumb, defendant Ordener," said the president; "it is proved that you were in communication with Schumacker, and your avowal of guilt accuses rather than justifies the prisoner of Munckholm. You went often to Munckholm, and certainly your visits were due to something more than mere curiosity, — witness this diamond buckle."

The president took from his desk the article which he described, and held it up for Ordener's inspection.

"Do you recognize it as having once belonged to you?"

"Yes. By what chance —"

“One of the rebels, just as he was breathing his last, handed it to our confidential secretary, stating that he received it from you in payment for carrying you from Drontheim to the fortress of Munckholm. Now I put this to you, my brother judges, does not such a fare, given to a simple boatman, show how much importance the prisoner Ordener Guldenlew attached to his visit to that prison where Schumacker was confined?”

“Ah!” cried Kennybol, “what his Courtesy says is true. I recognize the buckle; that’s the story our poor comrade Guldon Stayper told me.”

“Silence!” said the president; “let Ordener Guldenlew answer.”

“I will not deny,” said Ordener, “that I wished to see Schumacker. But this buckle has no significance. Visitors to the fortress are not allowed to take in diamonds; the boatman who rowed me thither complained of his poverty, so I tossed him the buckle which I could not retain.”

“Pardon me, your Courtesy,” interrupted the confidential secretary; “the regulation expressly excepts the viceroy’s family. You could therefore —”

“I did not choose to give my name.”

“Why not?” asked the president.

“That is something I cannot tell.”

“Your visits to Schumacker and his daughter prove that the object of your scheme was to set them free.”

Schumacker, who had thus far given no other sign of interest than sundry disdainful shrugs, arose at this juncture.

“To set me free! The object of this infernal conspiracy was to compromise and ruin me, as it still is. Do you believe that Ordener Guldenlew would have confessed his share in the crime, had he not been taken among the rebels? Oh! I see that he has inherited his father’s hatred for me. As to his supposed communications with myself and my daughter, let this detestable Guldenlew understand that my daughter has inherited my hatred for him, yes, and for the whole tribe of Guldenlews and Von Ahlefelds!”

Ordener sighed deeply, while Ethel beneath her breath disavowed her father’s statements, and the old man himself sank back upon the bench, still gasping with anger.

“The court will judge,” said the president.

Ordener, who had cast down his eyes in silence, while Schumacker was speaking, seemed suddenly to awake: —

“Oh! noble judges, listen,” he said. “You are now to search your consciences; do not forget that Ordener Guldenlew is the only culprit. Schumacker is innocent. These other poor fellows were deceived by Hacket, who was my agent. I did all the rest myself.”

Kennybol interrupted him: —

“His Worship says true, your Honors; for it was he who undertook to bring us the famous Hans of Iceland, whose name I trust may not bring me ill-luck. I know that this young gentleman dared to seek him out in the cave of Walderhog to propose to him to be our leader. He confided to my ear the

secret of his undertaking at the hut of my brother Braal in the village of Surb. As to the other point also, what he says is true; we were misled by that infernal Hacket; whence it follows that we do not deserve death."

"Herr Secretary," said the president, "the pleadings are closed. What are your conclusions?"

The secretary rose, bowed several times to the president, and kept his hand for some time among the plaits of his lace neck-band, with his eyes fixed upon the president's eyes. At last, he spoke as follows, in a hollow, lugubrious voice:—

"My lord president, and worshipful justices! The accusation is sustained. Ordener Guldenlew has succeeded in making manifest his own guilt, thereby tarnishing for all time the renown of his illustrious name, without establishing the innocence of Schumacker, the former chancellor, and his accomplices, Wilfred Kennybol, Jonas, Norbith, and Hans of Iceland. I demand that the six prisoners be declared by the court to be guilty of the crimes of high treason and *lèse majesté* in the first degree."

A vague murmuring was heard among the spectators. The president was about to announce that the proceedings were closed, when the bishop craved permission to be heard for a moment.

"Learned judges, it is proper that the defender of the accused should have the last word. I should be very glad if their defence were in better hands, for I am old and feeble, and I have no other strength than that which comes to me from God. I am

amazed at the harsh demands of the secretary. There is absolutely no proof of the guilt of my client Schumacker. There is nothing to indicate any direct participation on his part in the rising of the miners ; and since my other client, Ordener Guldenlew, asserts that he used Schumacker's name without authority, and furthermore that he was the only instigator of this damnable plot, all the presumptions which tended to cast suspicion upon Schumacker go for nothing, and you should acquit him. I commend to your clemency as Christian men the other accused, who lost their way, nothing more, like the sheep of the good shepherd. And so with Ordener Guldenlew, who has at least the merit, and a very great merit it is in the Lord's eyes, of having confessed his crime. Consider, worshipful judges, that he is still at an age when a man may falter, nay, fall even ; and God will not refuse to support him or to put him on his feet again. Ordener Guldenlew now bears hardly a fourth of the burden of existence which causes my shoulders to stoop, and my back to bend. Place his youth and inexperience in the scale when you come to judge him ; and do not take from him so soon the life which the Lord has but just given him."

The old man ceased to speak, and sat down beside Ordener, who smiled gratefully upon him. Then, at the president's suggestion, the judges rose from their seats, and silently withdrew from the court-room.

While these few men were deciding the fate of six of their fellows in their awesome sanctuary, the accused retained their seats upon the bench between

two rows of halberdiers. Schumacker with bent head seemed entirely absorbed in engrossing thoughts; the giant was gazing to right and left with a stupid expression of confidence; Jonas and Kennybol, with clasped hands, were praying in an undertone, while their comrade Norbith now and again stamped his foot on the floor, or shook his chains with his convulsive movements. Between him and the venerable bishop, who was reading the penitential psalms, sat Ordener, with folded arms and eyes fixed upon the ceiling.

Behind them was the crowd of spectators, who gave full play to their excitement as soon as the judges left the room. The famous prisoner of Munckholm, the redoubtable demon of Iceland, and above all the viceroy's son, engrossed all their thoughts and words and glances. The confused medley of voices, complaining, laughing, and vociferating, rose and fell as a flame flickers in the wind.

Thus passed several hours of dreary waiting, — so long that every one marvelled that they could all be contained in the same night. From time to time an anxious glance was cast upon the door of the chamber of consultation, but there was naught to be seen save the two soldiers with their gleaming halberds, walking back and forth before the fateful door like two dumb ghosts.

At last the torches and lamps began to pale, and the first rays of dawn were beginning to make their way in through the narrow windows of the hall, when the door was opened. Profound silence instantly succeeded, as if by magic, the uproar of the

crowd, and naught could be heard save the sound of hurried breathing and the nervous movement of a multitude of people in a state of suspense.

The judges came slowly forth from the chamber of consultation, the president at their head, and resumed their seats upon the bench.

The secretary, who had seemed to be absorbed in his own reflections during their absence, rose and bowed.

“My lord president,” he said, “what judgment has this court, whose judgment is without appeal, to render in the king’s name? We are ready to listen to it with profound respect.”

The judge who sat at the president’s right, stood up, holding a parchment in his hand: —

“His Grace, our illustrious president, being fatigued by the great length of the proceedings, has deigned to direct us, chief syndic of the province of Drontheimhus, and on ordinary occasions president of this worshipful court, to read in his stead the judgment rendered in the king’s name. We proceed to perform this honorable and painful duty, enjoining our hearers to keep silence in presence of the king’s infallible justice.”

Thereupon the chief syndic’s voice took on a solemn, impressive tone, and all hearts beat fast.

“In the name of our venerated master and legitimate lord, Christian, King! Following is the decree which we, the judges of the High Court of Drontheimhus, do pronounce upon our consciences in the matter of John Schumacker, prisoner of state; Wilfred Kennybol, of the Kole Mountains; Jonas,

worker in the royal mines; Norbith, worker in the royal mines; Hans of Klipstadur in Iceland; and Ordener Guldenlew, Baron von Thorvick and Knight of Dannebrog, — all of the above being accused of the crimes of high treason and *lèse majesté* in the first degree, — and Hans of Iceland, being accused, in addition, of murder, arson, and brigandage: —

“ 1st. John Schumacker is not guilty.

“ 2d. Wilfred Kennybol, Jonas, and Norbith are guilty, but the court has indulgence for them because they were led astray.

“ 3d. Hans of Iceland is guilty of all the crimes imputed to him.

“ 4th. Ordener Guldenlew is guilty of high treason and *lèse majesté* in the first degree.”

The syndic paused as if to take breath, and Ordener gazed upon him with a sort of celestial joy in his expression.

“ John Schumacker,” continued the syndic, “ the court acquits you, and remands you to your prison.

“ Kennybol, Jonas, and Norbith, the court commutes the penalty you have incurred to imprisonment for life and a fine of a thousand royal crowns each.

“ Hans of Klipstadur, murderer and incendiary, you will be taken this evening to the drill-ground of the fortress and there hanged by the neck until you are dead.

“ Ordener Guldenlew, traitor, after having your titles taken from you in presence of the court, you will be taken this evening to the same place, with a torch in your hand, there to have your head cut off

and your body burned; your ashes will then be thrown to the winds, and your head displayed upon a hurdle.

“And now withdraw. Such is the decree rendered by the king’s justice.”

The last words were hardly out of the syndic’s mouth when a piercing shriek rang through the hall. It froze the blood in the veins of the spectators even more effectually than the awe-inspiring phrases of the death sentence; it even drove the blood for a moment from the serene and radiant brow of Ordener the condemned.

XLIV.

It was misfortune which made them equal. — CHARLES NODIER.

AND so it was all over; his dream was about to be realized, or rather was already realized. He had saved the father of his beloved, and had saved her as well, because without her father she would have no one to lean upon. The young man's noble conspiracy to save Schumacker's life had succeeded, and the rest was of no consequence, — he had but to die.

Let those who deemed him guilty or mad now judge this generous-hearted Ordener, as he judged himself in his own soul with a thrill of ecstasy. For his only thought had been, when he threw in his lot with the rebels, that if he could not prevent the consummation of Schumacker's crime, he could at least prevent its punishment by assuming the whole responsibility.

"Alas!" he said to himself, "Schumacker is certainly guilty, but he is so embittered by his imprisonment and his misfortunes that the crime is pardonable. He simply wishes for freedom, and resorts to any means, even to rebellion, to compass it. And then, too, what would become of my Ethel if her father should be taken away, if she should lose him on the scaffold, if her life should be blighted again by fresh disgrace? What would become of

her, helpless and friendless, alone in her dungeon, or cast adrift upon a world filled with her enemies ? ”

This thought confirmed him in his purpose to sacrifice himself, and he made his preparations joyfully : for the greatest happiness of one who loves is to sacrifice his life, — I do not say to save the life of his beloved, but to win a smile or a tear from her.

He was taken fighting among the rebels, and haled before the judges who were to try Schumacker ; he perpetrated his generous falsehood, was condemned, and sentenced to die a cruel death, to suffer an ignominious punishment, and to leave a tarnished name ; but what mattered all that to a noble-hearted young man ? He had saved his Ethel's father.

He was sitting, loaded with chains, in a damp dungeon, into which the light and air could hardly find their way through a few small loop-holes ; by his side was his bodily sustenance for the balance of his days, a loaf of black bread, and a pitcher of water. An iron ring was around his neck, and iron bracelets and anklets cut into his flesh. Every hour that passed carried with it more of his life than a year takes from other men. And yet his dreams were beatific.

“ Perhaps my memory will not perish with me, in one heart, at least, which beats among men ! Perhaps she will deign to drop a tear for my blood that is shed for her ! Perhaps she will devote a regretful thought now and then to him who gave his life for her ! Perhaps in her maiden reveries the vague image of her friend will sometimes be present ! And who can say what comes after death ? Who can say

whether the souls that are delivered from their material prison cannot sometimes return and watch over those whom they have loved on earth, hold mysterious communion with those beloved companions, and bring to them in secret some virtue which none but angels possess, and some taste of the joys of heaven ? ”

Sometimes bitter thoughts were mingled with these comforting meditations. His heart was oppressed by the hatred Schumacker had manifested for him at the very moment of his sacrifice. The heart-breaking shriek which he had heard when the death sentence was pronounced moved him to the depths of his soul, for he alone among all in whose ears it rang recognized the voice, and understood the anguish. Was he never to see his beloved Ethel again ? Must he pass the last moments of his life beneath the same roof which sheltered her, and be debarred from touching the soft hand, and hearing the gentle voice of her for whose sake he was about to die ?

He was absorbed in this sad and dreamy revery, which is to the mind what sleep is to life, when the hoarse grinding of the rusty old bolts broke rudely upon his ear, which was beginning to listen for sounds from the other world whither it was soon to take flight. The heavy iron door of his dungeon swung open complainingly upon its hinges. The young prisoner arose calmly, almost joyously, for he thought that the executioner had come for him, and he had already thrown off his life like the cloak he was trampling under his feet.

He was disappointed in his expectation ; a slender,

white-robed figure appeared upon the threshold like a vision of light. Ordener could not believe his eyes, and wondered if he was not already in heaven. It was she, his own beloved Ethel !

The maiden threw herself into his manacled arms ; she bedewed his hands with her tears, which her luxuriant, disordered tresses at once wiped away ; she kissed the shackles which confined him, and wounded her chaste lips upon the cruel iron ; she said not a word, but it seemed as if her whole heart would come forth in the first word which should make itself heard through her sobs.

Ordener's heart leaped with the most heavenly bliss he had ever known since his birth. He pressed his Ethel fondly to his breast, and all the powers of earth and hell combined could not at that moment have unclasped the arms with which he held her to him. The consciousness that his death was at hand imparted a tinge of solemnity to his ecstasy, and he held fast to Ethel as if he had already taken possession of her for eternity.

He did not ask the ministering angel how she had succeeded in gaining admission to his dungeon. She was there ; how could he think of anything beyond that fact ? Nor, indeed, did he marvel at her presence. He did not even ask himself the question how the weak, captive, friendless girl had been able, notwithstanding the three iron doors, and the three rows of soldiers, to open her own prison and her lover's. It seemed a simple matter to him ; for his own experience had taught him what love can do.

Why speak with the voice, when one can speak

with the heart? Why not allow the body to listen in silence to the mysterious language of the emotions? Both were silent, because there are emotions which can be expressed in no other way.

At last, however, the maiden raised her head from its resting-place against the young man's wildly beating heart.

"Ordener," she said, "I am here to save you." She uttered these words of hope with the keenest anguish at her heart.

Ordener shook his head with a smile.

"Save me, Ethel! you are deluding yourself; flight is impossible."

"I know that only too well, alas! The castle is filled with soldiers, and every door that I had to pass through to reach you is guarded by archers, and jailers who never sleep. But," she added, with an effort, "I have another means of escape to suggest."

"Go to, it is a vain hope. Do not feed upon delusive visions, Ethel; in a few hours a stroke of the axe will cruelly put them all to flight."

"Oh! say no more, Ordener! you shall not die. Oh! take from me that frightful thought—nay, rather, keep it always before me in all its horror, that I may have the strength to accomplish my sacrifice and save your life."

There was an indefinable tone in the young girl's voice. Ordener gazed tenderly into her eyes.

"Your sacrifice! what do you mean?"

She hid her face in her hands, and whispered in a voice rendered almost inaudible by her sobs, "Oh, God!"

But her prostration lasted a moment only; she raised her head again; her eyes shone, and she forced her lips to smile. She was as beautiful as an angel ascending to heaven.

"Listen, Ordener, my own, the scaffold shall not be erected for you. You need but promise to marry Ulrica von Ahlefeld, and your life is saved."

"Ulrica von Ahlefeld! That name in your mouth, my Ethel!"

"Do not interrupt me," she continued with the calmness of a martyr undergoing supreme torture; "I come here by direction of the Countess von Ahlefeld. She promises to obtain your pardon from the king in exchange for your promise to give your hand to her daughter. I am here to ask you to swear to marry Ulrica and to live for her. They selected me for messenger because they thought that my voice might have some influence."

"Ethel," said the condemned man, in freezing tones, "farewell; as you go from this dungeon, tell them to send the executioner."

She rose, and stood for a moment in front of him, pale as death, and trembling in every limb; then her knees gave way, and she knelt on the stone floor, with her hands clasped imploringly.

"What have I done to him?" she muttered inaudibly.

Ordener gazed at the floor without speaking.

"My lord," she said, dragging herself on her knees to where he sat, "will you not speak to me? Have you nothing to say to me? There is nothing left for me but to die."

A tear rolled down the young man's cheek.

"Ethel, you no longer love me."

"Oh! God!" cried the poor girl, clasping the prisoner's knees in her arms, "he says that I no longer love him! You say that I do not love you, my Ordener? Can it be that you could say such a thing as that?"

"You cannot love me, since you despise me."

He repented bitterly the instant he uttered the cruel word; for Ethel's tone was heart-rending, as she threw her arms around his neck, and cried in a voice broken with tears:—

"Forgive me, Ordener, my beloved, forgive me as I forgive you. I despise you! Merciful God! are you not my treasure, my pride, my idol? Tell me, in Heaven's name, if there is aught in my words save the most fervent love, and idolatrous admiration for you? Alas! my adored Ordener, your harsh language cut me to the heart, when I came here for no purpose but to save you by sacrificing my happiness to yours."

The young man's heart grew softer, and he wiped away Ethel's tears with his kisses.

"Was it not showing very little esteem for me," he said, "to propose to me to purchase life by abandoning my Ethel, by basely disregarding my vows, by sacrificing my love?—my love," he added, with his eyes fixed upon Ethel's, "for which I have shed all my blood to-day."

A long moan preceded Ethel's reply.

"Listen to me once more, my Ordener, and do not accuse me so hastily. I am stronger, perhaps,

than we poor, weak women commonly are. From the top of our donjon I can see the scaffold destined for you being constructed on the drill-ground. Ordener! you cannot conceive the fearful agony of seeing preparations made for the death of the one who carries our life with him to the grave! The Countess von Ahlefeld, by whose side I was sitting when I heard your doom pronounced, sought me out in the donjon whither I had withdrawn with my father. She asked me if I wished to save your life, and suggested this hateful means of doing it. Dear Ordener, she said that I must destroy my own life, renounce you, lose you forever, abandon to another poor, heart-broken Ethel's only happiness, or else suffer your life to pay the forfeit. She gave me the choice between my own misery and your death, and I did not hesitate."

He kissed the angel's hand with profound respect.

"Nor do I hesitate, dearest Ethel. You would not have come to offer me life with Ulrica von Ahlefeld's hand, had you known how it happens that I am about to die."

"What? What mystery —"

"Allow me to have one secret which you do not share, my beloved Ethel. I wish to die and leave you in ignorance whether you ought to be grateful to me or hate me for my death."

"You wish to die! So you really mean to die? Oh, God! and it is all true, and the scaffold is being erected at this moment, and no human power can deliver my Ordener from an infamous death! Tell me, Ordener my beloved, — look straight into the

eyes of your slave, your friend, and promise to hear me without anger. Are you very, very sure — answer your Ethel as you would answer your God — that you could not live happily with this woman, this Ulrica von Ahlefeld? Are you perfectly sure, Ordener? She is, perhaps, nay, doubtless she is lovely, gentle, and virtuous; she is more deserving than she for whom you are giving your life. Nay, do not turn away your head, dear heart. You are so young, and so noble to die upon the scaffold! Ah, me! you and she will go and dwell happily in some great city, where you will soon forget this gloomy donjon; you will pass your days in peace and contentment without thought of me. I give my consent; banish me from your heart, yes, even from your memory, Ordener. Pray go, leave me here alone; it is for me to die. And believe me, when I know that you are in another's arms, you will not need to be anxious about me; I shall not suffer long."

She stopped; her voice was drowned in a flood of tears. And yet, even in her despairing gaze it was easy to read that her desire to win the victory which would surely cause her death, though agonizing to the last degree, was none the less sincere.

"Ethel, say no more about it," said Ordener. "Let no other names but yours and mine come from our mouths henceforth."

"Alas!" she replied; "alas! alas! is it your fixed purpose to die?"

"It must be. For you I go to the block with joy: for any other I should go to the altar with loathing. Say no more; you grieve and insult me."

She wept and wept, murmuring always : —

“He must die, oh, God! — and die an infamous death!”

“Believe me, Ethel,” rejoined the condemned man, smiling sadly, “there is less dishonor in that death than in such a life as you urge upon me.”

At that moment he raised his eyes from the weeping Ethel, and espied an old man in ministerial garb standing in the shadow under the low-arched doorway.

“What do you want?” he asked harshly.

“My lord, I came with the messenger of the Countess von Ahlefeld. You did not see me, so I waited until your eyes should fall upon me.”

Indeed, Ordener had had eyes for nothing but Ethel, and she, upon seeing Ordener, had entirely forgotten her companion.

“I am,” he continued, “the minister —”

“I understand,” said the young man; “I am ready.”

The minister came forward to where he stood.

“God is also ready to receive you, my son.”

“Herr Minister,” said Ordener, “your face seems familiar to me. I have seen you somewhere.”

The minister bowed.

“I recognize you as well, my son. It was in the tower of Vygla. We both demonstrated that day how little reliance is to be placed on the words of men. You promised me the pardon of twelve condemned malefactors, and I placed no faith in your promise, having no idea that you were what you are, the viceroy’s son; and you, my lord, who,

in giving me that assurance relied upon your rank and your influence — ”

Ordener completed the sentence which Athanasius Munder hesitated to complete.

“ I can obtain no pardon to-day, not even my own ; you are right, Herr Minister. I had too little thought for the future ; it has taken its revenge by proving that its power is superior to mine.”

The minister hung his head.

“ God is mighty,” he said.

Then he raised his kindly eyes again to Ordener’s face, and added : —

“ God is good.”

Ordener, who seemed absorbed in thought, exclaimed after a short silence : —

“ Hark ye, Herr Minister, I propose to keep the promise I made you in the tower of Vygla. When I am dead, go to Bergen to my father, the Viceroy of Norway, and say to him that the last favor his son has to ask is the pardon of your twelve protégés. He will grant it, I am sure.”

Tears of emotion streamed down the minister’s withered cheeks.

“ My son, your heart must indeed be filled with noble thoughts, when you can, in the same breath, spurn pardon for yourself, and generously solicit pardon for others. For I heard your refusal ; and although deploring the dangerous excess of a mere human passion, I was deeply touched thereby. I cannot refrain from saying to myself : *Unde scelus ?* How does it happen that a man whose sense of truth and justice is so near perfection, could have

stained his soul with the crime for which he is condemned?"

"My father, I did not tell this angel of light, and I cannot tell you. But pray believe that the cause of my conviction was no crime."

"How so? Explain yourself, my son."

"Do not press me," the young man replied firmly. "Let me carry the secret of my death to the tomb with me."

"This youth cannot be guilty," muttered the minister.

He took from his breast a black crucifix, which he placed upon a sort of altar, roughly fashioned from a slab of granite, which stood against the damp wall of the cell. Beside the crucifix he placed a small lighted iron lamp and an open Bible.

"Pray and meditate, my son," he said. "I will return in a few hours. Come," he added turning to Ethel, who had maintained a dreamy silence throughout his dialogue with Ordener, "we must leave the prisoner now. Time is flying."

She arose with a tranquil and radiant expression, in which there was something almost divine.

"Herr Minister," she said, "I cannot go with you yet. You must first unite Ethel Schumacker to her husband Ordener Guldenlew."

She looked up into Ordener's eyes.

"If you were still powerful and renowned and free, my Ordener, I would sever my destiny from yours, and weep my heart away in silence. But now that you no longer need fear the contagion of my misery, now that you are like me a prisoner, dishonored and

oppressed, now that you are about to die, I come to you, hoping that you will at least deign, Ordener, my lord, to permit her who could never have been your companion in life, to be your companion in death; for you love me so dearly, do you not, that you cannot doubt for a single instant that I shall die at the same moment that you die?"

The condemned man fell at her feet, and kissed the hem of her dress.

"You, reverend sir," she continued, "you must take the place of parents and family; this dungeon will be the temple; this stone, the altar. Here is my ring; we are kneeling before God and before you. Give us your blessing and say over us the sacred words which will unite Ethel Schumacker to Ordener Guldenlew, her dear lord."

They knelt side by side in front of the priest who gazed at them in amazement mingled with pity.

"What is this, my children? what are you doing?"

"Father," said the maiden, "the time is short. God and death await us."

At times in one's life, one encounters an irresistible, forceful will, to which one yields at once as if it were something greater than a mere human will. The priest sighed, and raised his eyes toward heaven.

"May the Lord pardon me if my compliance is sinful! You love each other, and you have but little time to love on earth; I do not believe that I pervert my sacred calling by legitimizing your love."

The momentous, comforting ceremony was performed. They rose and stood before the priest to

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receive the final benediction. They were man and wife.

The face of the condemned man shone with a joy that was more agonizing than sorrow ; one would have said that he was beginning to feel the bitterness of death just as he had his first taste of the happiness of living. The features of his companion were sublime in their simple grandeur ; she was still as modest as a virgin, and already as proud as a young wife.

“ Listen, Ordener mine,” she said ; “ is it not true that we are happy now to die, since in life we could never have been united ? You do not know what I will do, my darling — I will take my place at the window of the donjon, so that I can see you mount the scaffold, and thus our souls may fly heavenward together. If I die before the axe falls, I await you ; for we are husband and wife, my adored Ordener, and this evening the coffin will be our marriage bed.”

He strained her to his bursting heart, but could say no words but these, which expressed his whole idea of life thenceforward : —

“ Ethel, you are really mine ! ”

“ My children,” said the chaplain, his voice broken with emotion, “ say farewell. It is time.”

“ Alas ! ” cried Ethel.

All her more than human strength came back to her, and she bowed her head before her husband.

“ Farewell ! Ordener, my best beloved ; give me your blessing, my dear lord.”

The prisoner did as she requested, then turned to say farewell to Athanasius Munder. The old man was kneeling at his feet.

“ Why is this, father ? ” he asked in amazement.

The old man looked up at him, and said in a gentle and humble tone : —

“ Give me your blessing, my son.”

“ May Heaven bless you and bestow upon you all the happiness which your prayers invoke for your brethren,” replied Ordener, solemnly and with deep emotion.

Soon the tomblike arches heard the last farewells and the last kisses ; soon the cruel bolts shot noisily into place, and the iron door separated the youthful husband and wife, who were about to die, having appointed a meeting in eternity.

XLV.

To him who shall deliver to me Luis Perez, dead or alive, I will give two thousand crowns. — CALDERON: *Luis Perez of Galicia*.

“BARON Vøethaün, colonel of the arquebusiers of Munckholm, which of the soldiers who fought under your orders made Hans of Iceland prisoner? Name him to the court, that he may receive the thousand royal crowns offered as a reward for that capture.”

Thus spoke the president of the tribunal to the colonel of the arquebusiers. The court was in session; for it was an ancient custom in Norway that the judges from whose decree no appeal could be taken should remain upon the bench until their sentence was executed. In front of them was the giant, who had been brought into the presence with the rope around his neck with which he was to be hanged a few hours later.

The colonel, who was sitting at the secretary's table, rose, and saluted the judges and the bishop, who had once more taken his place upon his platform.

“Worshipful judges,” he said, “the soldier who captured Hans of Iceland is in the room. His name is Toric Belfast, and he is second arquebusier of my regiment.”

“Let him come forward, then,” said the president, “to receive the promised reward.”

A young man in the Munckholm uniform presented himself within the enclosure.

"You are Toric Belfast?" the president asked.

"Yes, your Grace."

"Are you the man who made Hans of Iceland prisoner?"

"Yes, with St. Beelzebub's aid, may it please your Excellency."

A heavy bag was placed upon the president's desk.

"Do you recognize this man as the notorious Hans of Iceland?" asked the president, pointing to the fettered giant.

"I know my pretty Cattie's face better than Hans of Iceland's; but I swear by the glory of St. Belphegor, that if Hans of Iceland exists, he exists in the person of that great devil."

"Come forward, Toric Belfast. Here are the thousand crowns promised by the chief syndic."

The soldier was rushing forward toward the bench, when a voice in the crowd cried out:—

"It was not you who took Hans of Iceland, arquebusier of Munckholm!"

"By all the blessed devils!" cried the soldier, turning about. "I have no property but my pipe and this minute in which I am speaking, but I promise to give ten thousand golden crowns to the man who says that, if he can prove what he says;" and he folded his arms and gazed calmly over the crowd of spectators.

"Well! why doesn't the man who spoke show himself?"

"It was I!" said a little man, forcing his way through the crowd toward the enclosure.

He was wrapped in a sort of mat of rushes and sealskin, — a Greenlander's costume, — which fell around him like the conical roof of a hut. His beard was black, and thick matted locks of the same color covered his red eyebrows, and hid his face almost completely; such parts of it as could be seen were hideous. Neither his arms nor his hands were visible.

"Ah! it's you, is it?" said the soldier, with a laugh. "Pray, who did have the honor of taking this devilish giant, in your opinion, my fine fellow?"

The little man shook his head, and said, with a cunning smile: —

"I did."

At that moment Baron Voethaün thought that he recognized in this extraordinary character the mysterious being who gave him notice at Skongen of the arrival of the rebels; Chancellor von Ahlefeld, the host of the ruins of Arbar; and the confidential secretary, a certain peasant of Oëlmœ, who wore a similar garment, and had directed him so accurately to Hans of Iceland's haunt. But as no two of them were together, they could not compare their fleeting impressions, which, indeed, would soon have been effaced by the differences in costume and feature which they respectively observed.

"Did you, indeed?" retorted the soldier, ironically. "Were it not for your Greenland seal's outfit, I should be tempted to recognize you as the same dwarf who tried to pick a quarrel with me in the Spladgest a fortnight ago; it was the day that the body of Gill Stadt, the miner, was brought there."

"Gill Stadt!" the little man ejaculated with a convulsive start.

"Yes, Gill Stadt," repeated the soldier, carelessly, "the cast-off lover of a girl who was the mistress of one of our comrades, and for whom he killed himself like an idiot."

"At that time was there not also the dead body of an officer of your regiment at the Spladgest?" said the little man, in a hollow voice.

"Precisely; I shall remember that day all my life. I overstayed the tattoo at the Spladgest, and was near being cashiered when I returned to the fort. The officer was Captain Dispolsen."

At that name the secretary rose.

"These two fellows are abusing the patience of the court. We beg his Grace the president to put an end to this unprofitable discussion."

"By my Cattie's honor, I ask nothing better," said Toric Belfast, "provided that your Honors award me the thousand crowns reward for Hans's head, for I made him prisoner."

"You lie!" cried the dwarf.

The soldier felt for his sword at his side.

"It is very fortunate for you, scoundrel, that we are in presence of the court, where even a Munckholm arquebusier must be unarmed like an old hen."

"The reward belongs to me," said the little man, coolly; "for you would not have had Hans of Iceland's head but for me."

The enraged soldier swore that he captured the giant just as he was opening his eyes as he lay prostrate on the battle-field.

"Very well," said his opponent, "it may be that you took him, but it was I who struck him down; except for me, you would n't have been able to make him your prisoner; therefore the thousand crowns belong to me."

"That is false," retorted the soldier; "it was not you who struck him down, but a devil dressed in wild beast's skins."

"That was myself."

"No, no!"

The president ordered both the parties to keep silent; then he again asked Colonel Vœthaün if Toric Belfast brought Hans of Iceland in, and, upon his affirmative response, he decided that the reward belonged to the soldier.

The dwarf ground his teeth as the arquebusier eagerly put out his hand to take the bag.

"One moment!" cried the dwarf. "Herr President, this sum, according to the chief syndic's proclamation, belongs to the man who shall produce Hans of Iceland, and to no other."

"What then?" queried the judges.

The little man turned and pointed to the giant.

"That man is not Hans of Iceland."

A murmur of astonishment ran through the hall. The president and the secretary trembled on their seats.

"No," the little man said again, vehemently; "the money does not belong to this accursed arquebusier, for that man is not Hans of Iceland."

"Halberdiers," said the president, "remove this fellow; he has lost his reason."

The bishop here interposed : —

“ Will the worshipful president allow me to suggest that, by refusing to hear this man, the court may destroy a possible means of salvation for the condemned man here present. I demand that the discussion be allowed to continue.”

“ Reverend bishop, the court will satisfy you on this point,” the president replied. “ You have asserted,” he said to the giant, “ that you are Hans of Iceland ; do you reiterate that assertion with the fear of death before your eyes ? ”

“ I do,” said the condemned man ; “ I am Hans of Iceland.”

“ You hear, my lord bishop ? ”

“ You lie, you mountaineer of Kole ! ” cried the dwarf, simultaneously with the president. “ Do not persist in carrying a name which overburdens you ; remember that it has already brought you bad luck ! ”

“ I am Hans of Klipstadur in Iceland,” repeated the giant, doggedly, with his eyes fixed on the secretary.

The dwarf approached the soldier from Munckholm, who, in common with the other spectators, was watching the scene with deep interest.

“ Mountaineer of Kole,” he said, “ they say that Hans of Iceland drinks human blood ; if you are he, prove it by drinking some of this.”

The words were hardly out of his mouth when, throwing aside his cloak, he plunged a dagger into the arquebusier’s heart, and threw the body at the giant’s feet.

A cry of mingled terror and horror arose throughout the hall, and the soldiers who were guarding the giant fell back. Quick as lightning the little man darted upon the unprotected mountaineer, dealt him a blow with his dagger, and his body fell across the soldier's.

In a trice he threw off his cloak, removed his false hair and beard, and disclosed his powerful limbs encased in filthy skins, and a countenance which caused even more alarm among those present than did the dagger, which he waved above his head, dripping with the blood of the two murdered men.

"Ho! my worthy judges, where is Hans of Iceland now?"

"Guards, seize the monster!" cried the terror-stricken president.

Hans threw his dagger upon the floor.

"It's of no use to me if there are no more of the Munckholm regiment here," he said.

With that he gave himself up without resistance to the halberdiers and archers who surrounded him, making preparations to besiege him as if he were a town. They chained him to the criminal's bench, and his two victims, one of whom, the mountaineer, was still breathing, were removed upon a litter.

It is impossible to describe the successive waves of terror, wonder, and indignation which stirred the people, the guards, and the judges during that awful scene. When the brigand had taken his place, with calm, impassive bearing, upon the felon's bench, the feeling of curiosity imposed silence on every other emotion, and comparative tranquillity resulted from

the universal, breathless interest in the progress of events.

The venerable bishop rose.

“Worshipful judges —” he began.

But the brigand cut him short.

“Bishop of Drontheim, I am Hans of Iceland; do not take the trouble to defend me.”

The private secretary rose.

“Noble president —” he began.

The monster interposed again: —

“Herr Secretary, I am Hans of Iceland; do not take the trouble to make charges against me.”

Thereupon, with his feet dabbling in blood, he let his fierce, impudent glance rove over the judges, the archers, and the crowd, and it seemed as if every man of them shook with fright beneath the gaze of that single, unarmed, shackled dwarf.

“Hark ye, judges, and expect no long speeches from me. I am the demon of Klipstadur. My mother was old Iceland, the island of volcanoes. Formerly it was but a single mountain, but it was broken in two by a giant who rested on its summit when he fell from the sky. I have no need to say much to you of myself. I am descended from Ingolfus the Exterminator, and I have his spirit within me. I have committed more murders and lighted more fires than all of you ever pronounced of unjust judgments in your whole lives. I have secrets in common with the Chancellor von Ahlefeld. I would drink all the blood which flows in all your veins with the keenest pleasure. It is my nature to hate men, and my mission to destroy them. Colonel

of the Munckholm arquebusiers, it was I who informed you of the march of the miners through the gorge of the Black Pillar, — feeling sure that you would kill a vast number of men in the ravine ; it was I who wiped out a battalion of your regiment with blocks of granite, — I was avenging my son. Now, judges, my son is dead, and I am here in search of death. The spirit of Ingolphus is a burden to me, because I bear it alone, and have no heir to whom to transmit it. I am weary of my life, since I can no longer make of it a lesson and an example for my successor. I have drunk enough blood ; I am no longer thirsty. And now here I am ; you may drink mine.”

He ceased, and many voices repeated beneath their breath every one of his terrifying words.

“ My son,” said the bishop, “ for what object, pray, did you commit so many crimes ? ”

The brigand began to laugh.

“ I’ faith, reverend bishop, I swear that my purpose was not, like your brother’s the Bishop of Borglum, to enrich myself.¹ There was something in me which impelled me to do it.”

“ God does not always reside in all his ministers,” said the devout old man, humbly. “ You choose to insult me when I would gladly defend you.”

“ Your Reverence is wasting your time. Go and ask your other colleague, the Bishop of Scalholt in Iceland. By Ingolphus, it would be a curious thing

¹ Some chroniclers assert that in 1525 a bishop of Borglum made himself notorious by divers acts of brigandage. He kept pirates in his pay, they say, who infested the shores of Norway.

that two bishops should have taken charge of my life, one when I was in my cradle, and the other when I had one foot in the grave. Bishop, you are an old fool."

"My son, do you believe in God?"

"Why not? I choose to believe that there is a God, so that I can blaspheme."

"Cease, wretched man! you are soon to die, and you do not kiss the feet of Christ!"

Hans shrugged his shoulders.

"If I did it would be after the style of the gendarme of Roll, who brought the king to earth when he kissed his foot."

The bishop resumed his seat in great dejection of spirit.

"Come, judges," continued Hans, "why do you wait? If I were in your place and you in mine, I would not keep you waiting so long for your death sentence."

The judges withdrew. After a brief consultation they returned to the court-room, and the president read a decree which, according to the established formula, sentenced Hans of Iceland *to be hanged by the neck until he was dead*.

"That is all right," said the brigand. "Chancellor von Ahlefeld, I know enough about you to procure a similar doom for you. But live on, for you do evil to men. Come! I am sure now of not going to Nysthiem."¹

The secretary ordered the guards who removed

¹ According to the popular tradition *Nysthiem* was the hell of those who died of disease or of old age.

him to put him in the donjon of the Lion of Schleswig until a dungeon was prepared for him in the quarters of the arquebusiers of Munckholm.

“In the quarters of the arquebusiers of Munckholm!” echoed the monster with a howl of delight.

XLVI.

Meanwhile the body of Ponce de Leon, which was left lying by the fountain, showed signs of decomposition under the burning rays of the sun, and the Moors of Alpuxares took possession of it, and carried it to Granada. — E. H.: *The Captive of Ochali*.

MEANWHILE, just before dawn of the day on which the scene we have just described took place, — at the very hour when Ordener's sentence was pronounced at Munckholm, — Oglypiglap, Benignus Spiagudry's former assistant and present successor, was rudely awakened from his slumbers by divers resounding blows upon the door of the Spladgest at Drontheim. He left his humble couch with great regret, took his copper lamp, whose dim light made him blink his sleepy eyes, and went out through the dead-house, cursing at its dampness, to open the door to his unceremonious visitors.

They were fishermen from the lake of Sparbo, bearing a litter, strewn with rushes and mudwort, whereon lay a dead body which they had found in the lake.

They deposited their burden inside the ghastly structure, and Oglypiglap gave them a receipt for the body, so that they might claim the reward.

When he was once more alone in the Spladgest, he began to remove the clothes from the body, which was remarkably long and thin. The first object that

his eyes fell upon, when he lifted the sheet in which it was wrapped, was an enormous wig.

“Upon my soul!” he said to himself, “this odd-shaped wig has been through my hands before; it belonged to that young French dandy — Why,” he continued, pursuing his task, “here are the top-boots that belonged to Cramner, the poor postilion who was trampled under foot by his horses! and — what the devil does this mean? — here’s the whole black suit that Professor Syngramtax wore, the old blue-stocking who drowned himself lately. Who the deuce is this new-comer, dressed in the wardrobe of all my old acquaintances?”

He passed the light from his lamp over the dead man’s face, but to no purpose; the features were decomposed, and had lost all form and color. He fumbled in the pockets of the coat, and pulled out some old water-soaked, mud-stained parchments; he rubbed them energetically with his leather apron, and succeeded in deciphering upon one of them these disjointed, half-effaced phrases: —

“Rudbeck. Saxon the grammarian. Arngrim, Bishop of Holum. . . . There are but two countships in Norway, Larvig and Jarlsberg, and one barony. . . . There are no silver mines except at Kongsberg; loadstone and asbestos at Sund-Moër; amethyst at Guldbranshal; chalcedony, agate, and jasper at the Fa-roër islands. . . . At Noukahiva, in time of famine, the men eat their wives and children. . . . Thormodus Thorfoeus; Isleif, Bishop of Scalholt, the first historian of Iceland. . . . Mercury played chess with the moon, and won the seventy-second game. . . . Malstrom, a

gulf. . . . *Hirundo, hirudo*. . . . Cicero, a stingy curmudgeon : glory. . . . Frode, the savant. . . . Odin consulted the head of Mimer, the sage. . . . (Mahomet and his pigeon, Sertorius and his bitch.) . . . The more sunshine, the less gypsum — ”

“I can hardly believe my eyes!” he cried, letting the paper fall to the floor ; “it’s my old master’s handwriting, Benignus Spiagudry ! ”

He examined the body more carefully, and recognized the long hands, sparse locks, and the whole general appearance of the castaway.

“They were quite right,” he reflected, with a shake of the head, “to make charges of sacrilege and sorcery against him. The devil carried him off and drowned him in the Sparbo. Which of us can say what he’s coming to ? Who would ever have thought that Doctor Spiagudry, after entertaining others so long in this dead-man’s inn, would come some day from a long distance to be entertained here himself ! ”

The philosophical little Lapp was in the act of lifting the body, to place it upon one of the six granite slabs, when he noticed that something heavy was hanging by a leathern thong to Spiagudry’s neck.

“Of course it’s the stone the demon used to make him sink,” he muttered.

He was mistaken ; it was a small iron casket, upon which, after wiping it carefully, he discovered a broad clasp within a shield.

“There must be some devilry or other about the box,” he said ; “the man was a sacrilegist and a sorcerer. I must go and put the box in the bishop’s hands ; perhaps there’s a demon inside.”

Thereupon he detached it from the body, which he placed upon its stone couch, and then hurried away to the Episcopal palace, muttering prayers as he went, as a protection against the redoubtable box that he carried.

XLVII.

What fierce spirit is it tears thee thus ?
Show me the horrid tenant of thy heart.

MATURIN. — *Bertram.*

HANS of Iceland and Schumacker were in the same apartment of the donjon of Schleswig. The exonerated ex-chancellor was pacing slowly back and forth, his eyes brimming over with bitter tears. The condemned brigand, surrounded by guards, was laughing at his fetters.

For a long time the two prisoners watched each other in silence ; it was as if each was conscious of the feeling that they were mutual foes of mankind.

“ Who are you ? ” the ex-chancellor finally asked.

“ I will tell you my name,” was the reply, “ to frighten you away from me. I am Hans of Iceland.”

Schumacker walked up to where the dwarf was sitting.

“ Take my hand ! ” he said.

“ Do you want me to devour it ? ”

“ Hans of Iceland,” Schumacker rejoined, “ I love you because you hate men.”

“ That is why I hate you.”

“Hark ye. I hate men, as you do, because I have been kind to them, and they have repaid me by injuring me.”

“You do not hate them as I do; I hate them because they have been kind to me, and I have repaid them by injuring them.”

Schumacker shuddered at the monster's expression. Try as he might to conquer his nature, his heart refused to beat in sympathy with anything so repulsive.

“Yes,” he cried, “I abhor men because they are cruel, ungrateful knaves. I owe all the misfortunes of my life to them.”

“So much the better! For my part I owe them all the happiness of mine.”

“What happiness?”

“The happiness of feeling living flesh quiver under my teeth, and smoking blood warm my thirsty palate!—the pleasure of crushing living beings between huge rocks, and of hearing the victim's shrieks mingled with the noise of shattered limbs. Those are the pleasures which I owe to men.”

Schumacker recoiled in horror from the monster whom he had approached with something very like pride in the fancied resemblance between them. Overwhelmed with shame, he hid his venerable face in his hands, for his eyes were filled with indignation, no longer against mankind, but against himself. His big, noble heart took fright at the hatred which he had so long borne to his kind, when he saw it reproduced in Hans of Iceland's heart as in a mirror.

“Well, my enemy of mankind,” sneered the monster, “do you dare to boast that you are like me?”

The old man shuddered.

“Oh, God! rather than hate men as you do, I much prefer to love them.”

The guards came to take the monster to a more secure place of confinement. Schumacker was left alone with his thoughts, but he was no longer an enemy of mankind.

XLVIII.

When the villain spies me, wilt thou let me fall into his hands, O Lord? He it was who broke up thy paths beneath my feet. Punish me not, for the crime is his. — A. DE VIGNY.

THE fatal hour had arrived; the sun had gone down until but half of its disk was visible above the horizon. The posts were doubled in strength throughout the fortress of Munckholm, and silent, stern-faced sentries were pacing back and forth before every door. The uproar in the town could be heard with great distinctness in the gloomy towers, where the excitement and agitation were intense. From every courtyard arose the melancholy sound of muffled drums; the cannon in the low tower boomed forth at regular intervals; the massive bell on the donjon swung slowly to and fro, with solemn, echoing peal; and from hundreds of points on shore, boats laden with people were hurrying toward the frowning rock. On the drill-ground of the castle stood a scaffold, draped in black, in the centre of a square of soldiers, who were pressed close by a pushing, impatient crowd, constantly increasing in size. Upon the scaffold stood a man dressed in red serge, sometimes leaning on an axe which he held in his hand, and again busying himself with a block and hurdle which lay on the platform. Near by was a funeral pile, with several resinous torches, already lighted, close at

hand. Between the scaffold and the pile a stake was stuck in the ground, and on it was a placard : "*Ordener Guldenlew, traitor.*" From the drill-ground, a great black flag could be seen flying at the top of the donjon of Schleswig.

The judges were still in session, and Ordener was brought before them. The bishop alone was not present, as his duties as the prisoners' counsel had ceased.

The viceroy's son was dressed in black, and wore the collar of Dannebrog around his neck. His face was pale, but his expression was proud and serene. He was alone ; for they had come to fetch him before the chaplain, Athanasius Munder, returned to his cell.

Ordener's sacrifice was already consummated so far as he was himself concerned. And yet Ethel's husband was thinking somewhat bitterly of life, and would perhaps have been glad could he have chosen for his wedding night some other than that on which the tomb opened to receive him. He had prayed and he had dreamed in his dungeon. Now he was standing in presence of the end of every prayer and every dream. He felt strong with the strength which God and love bestow.

The spectators, who were much more excited than the prisoner, devoured him with their eager glances. His exalted rank and his awful fate aroused universal compassion. Not one of those present could conceive any explanation of his crime. There is a strange something in human nature which makes men flock to witness the spectacle of human suffering with as much zest as to more humane entertainments.

With ghastly eagerness they strive to read upon the distorted features of the condemned man his dying thoughts, as if some revelation of heaven or hell might be expected to appear in the poor wretch's eyes at that fateful moment; as if to see the shadow cast by the wings of the angel of death hovering over a human head; as if to scrutinize what is left of a man when hope has abandoned him. This being, instinct with life and health, whose death is impending, who lives and breathes, and who in a moment will cease to live and breathe, surrounded by other beings like himself, to whom he has done no ill, who pity him, and no one of whom can help him; this wretched creature, dying, though not moribund, bending beneath a material power, and a power that is invisible; this life which society cannot bestow, but which it takes away with solemn pomp,—all this imposing ceremony of death under the forms of law has a startling effect upon the imagination. Living as we all do under the shadow of an indefinitely postponed sentence of death, the unfortunate who knows the precise hour at which his reprieve is to terminate is an object of strange and painful curiosity to us.

The reader will remember that before mounting the scaffold Ordener was to be taken before the court to be deprived of his titles and his decorations. As soon as the excitement caused by his arrival had died away, the president called for the book of heraldry of the two kingdoms, and the statutes of the Order of Dannebrog.

Thereupon he ordered the prisoner to bend his

knee, enjoined silence upon the spectators, and opening the book containing the statutes, began to read as follows, in a loud, impressive voice : —

“ We, Christian, by the grace and mercy of the Almighty, King of Denmark and Norway, of the Goths and Vandals, Duke of Schleswig, Holstein, Stormaria, and Dytmarse, Count of Oldenburg and Delmenhurst, do make proclamation that, having reconstituted, at the suggestion of our grand-chancellor the Count von Griffenfeld (the president passed so rapidly over the name that it could scarcely be heard), “ the royal Order of Dannebrog, founded by our illustrious ancestor, St. Waldemar, —

“ And inasmuch as it has seemed to us, in view of the fact that this venerable order was founded in memory of Dannebrog, sent from heaven to our blessed kingdom, that its divine institution would be belied if any one of the knights could with impunity transgress the laws of honor, and of the Church and State, —

“ We do ordain, on our knees before God, that whosoever, among the knights of the order, shall have sold his soul to the devil by the commission of treason or any felony, shall, after being publicly reprovved by the judges, be forever degraded from the rank of knight of our royal Order of Dannebrog.”

The president closed the book.

“ Ordener Guldenlew, Baron von Thorvick, knight of Dannebrog, you have been convicted of high treason, a crime for which you are to be beheaded, your body burned, and your ashes scattered to the wind. Ordener Guldenlew, traitor, you have confessed your own unworthiness to rank among the knights of

Dannebrog. I order you to kneel, for I am about to declare your degradation publicly, in the king's name."

The president placed his hand upon the book of the order, and was opening his mouth to pronounce the prescribed formula of degradation upon Ordener, who knelt calmly before him, when a door at the right of the bench was thrown open. An ecclesiastical usher appeared and announced his Reverence the Bishop of Drontheimhus.

The bishop rushed into the court-room, closely followed by another ecclesiastic.

"Stop, my lord president," he cried with a vehemence hardly to be expected in a man of his years; "stop! Heaven be blessed! I am in time."

The assemblage listened more intently than ever, anticipating some new development.

The president turned to the bishop with some irritation of manner.

"Will your Reverence permit me to observe that your presence is useless here. The court is about to pass sentence of degradation upon the prisoner, who is soon to undergo the death penalty."

"Beware," said the bishop, "of laying hands upon him who is pure in God's sight. This condemned man is innocent."

Nothing can be fitly compared to the cry of astonishment which echoed through the hall, save the cry of alarm which the president and secretary uttered with one breath.

"Well you may tremble, O judges," pursued the bishop, before Von Ahlefeld had time to recover

his self-possession ; “for you were on the point of shedding innocent blood.”

While the president was recovering from the shock Ordener rose to his feet in amazement. The generous youth feared that his ruse was discovered, and that they had found proofs of Schumacker's guilt.

“My lord bishop,” said the president, “it would seem that in this matter the crime is very anxious to elude us, by passing from one man's shoulders to another. Do not rely upon some deceptive probability. If Ordener Guldenlew is innocent, who, we pray to know, is the guilty man?”

“Your Grace shall be informed at once,” the bishop replied. “My noble lords,” he continued, pointing to an iron casket in the hands of a servant who stood behind him, “you formed your judgment in the dark; in this casket is the miraculous light which will make everything clear as day.”

The president, the secretary, and Ordener seemed equally struck by the appearance of the mysterious casket.

“Noble judges, hear what we have to say. To-day, as we were returning to our episcopal residence, with the view of obtaining some repose after the fatigues of the night, and to pray for the souls of the doomed men, this sealed iron box was placed in our hands. We were told that the keeper of the Spladgest brought it to our palace this morning, to be handed to us, affirming that it doubtless contained some mysterious device of Satan, as he had found it upon the dead body of the sacrilegist,

Benignus Spiagudry, which was discovered in the lake of Sparbo."

Ordener's interest redoubled in intensity. The silence throughout the hall was almost painful. The president and secretary bowed their heads as if they were already condemned. It seemed as if they had both forgotten all their cunning and audacity. There are moments in a villain's life when his power for evil abandons him.

"Having blessed the casket," continued the bishop, "we broke the seal, which bore, as you can see for yourselves, the cancelled arms of Griffenfeld. What we found within was, indeed, Satan's own secret. Judge if we say not rightly so, worshipful judges. Pray give us all your attention, for human blood is at stake in this matter, and the Lord weighs every drop."

Opening the mysterious box, he took out a parchment, on the back whereof was written the following attestation : —

I, Blaxtham Cumbysulsum, being at the point of death, do declare that I place in the hands of Captain Dispolsen, agent at Copenhagen of the former Count von Griffenfeld, the within document, written from beginning to end by Turiaf Musdæmon, retainer of the Count von Ahlefeld, to be put to such use as the aforesaid Dispolsen pleases. And I pray God to forgive my sins. Done at Copenhagen this eleventh day of January in the year one thousand six hundred and ninety-nine.

CUMBYSULSUM.

The secretary shook like a leaf. He tried to speak, but could not. The bishop meanwhile

handed the parchment to the pallid, trembling president.

“What do I see?” ejaculated the latter as he unfolded it. “‘*Minute for the Count von Ahlefeld as to the means of putting Schumacker out of the way by process of law!*’ — reverend bishop, I swear —”

The paper fell from his hands.

“Read it, my lord, read it,” the bishop insisted. “I have no doubt that your unworthy servant used your name without authority, as he did poor Schumacker’s. But see the result of your unseemly hatred for your disgraced predecessor. One of your courtiers has plotted his ruin in your name, hoping to gain credit with your Grace thereby.”

These words restored the president’s self-control, proving, as they did, that the suspicions of the bishop, who knew all that the casket contained, did not fall upon him. Ordener also breathed more freely. It began to dawn upon him that the innocence of Ethel’s father was about to be made clear simultaneously with his own. He could not but marvel at the extraordinary chance which led him to go in search of a dangerous outlaw to obtain possession of the casket which Benignus Spiagudry, his guide in that very search, had upon his person; so that it was almost under his eyes while he was in quest of it. His thoughts also dwelt upon the lesson to be drawn from the fact that his life was now saved by this very casket which had brought him to the brink of the grave.

The president, with renewed courage, proceeded to read a long memorandum, wherein Musdæmon

explained in great detail the abominable scheme which we have seen him put in execution in the course of this narrative. As he read, he spared no outward manifestations of righteous indignation, which was shared to the full by all his hearers. Several times the secretary essayed to rise and defend himself; but each time the outcry from the crowd forced him back into his seat. At last the reading came to an end, and was followed by loud murmurs expressive of the horror which it had caused.

“Halberdiers, seize that man!” said the president, motioning toward the secretary.

The miserable wretch, without strength to resist or to speak, was hustled to the prisoner’s bench, amid the hooting of the people.

“Worshipful judges,” said the bishop, “tremble and rejoice. The truth which has been brought home to your consciences will now be established beyond peradventure by the testimony of the chaplain of the prisons of this royal burgh, our honored brother, Athanasius Munder, here present.”

It proved to be Athanasius Munder who accompanied the bishop. He bowed respectfully to his spiritual chief and to the court, and, at a sign from the president, spoke as follows:—

“What I am about to say is the truth. May the just punishment of Heaven be meted out to me if I say one word here with any other purpose than to do good! After certain things which took place this morning in the cell of the viceroy’s son, I was convinced in my own mind that the young man was

not guilty, although your lordships convicted him on his own confession. Now, a few hours since, I was summoned to administer the last consolations of religion to the ill-starred mountaineer who was so brutally murdered in your presence, and whom your lordships condemned as being Hans of Iceland. This is what the dying man said to me : ‘ I am not Hans of Iceland ; I am justly punished for assuming that name. I was paid to play the part by the confidential secretary of the grand chancellor’s office ; his name is Musdœmon, and he engineered the whole revolt under the name of Hacket. I believe he is the only really guilty man in the whole affair.’ Thereupon he asked for my blessing, and urged me to hasten hither and repeat his words to the court. God is my witness to the truth of what I say. May I be able to save an innocent man’s life, and not cause the blood of the guilty to be shed ! ”

He ceased to speak, bowing again to his bishop and the judges.

“ Your Grace will see,” said the bishop to the president, “ that one of my clients was not wrong in detecting a resemblance between this Hacket and your secretary.”

“ Turiaf Musdœmon,” said the president to the new occupant of the felon’s bench, “ what have you to allege in your defence ? ”

Musdœmon gave his master a look which terrified him. He had recovered all his assurance. After a moment’s silence he replied : —

“ Nothing, my lord.”

The president continued, in a weak, hesitating voice :

“Do you, then, confess that you are guilty of the charges preferred against you? Do you admit that you are the author of a conspiracy against the State, and against one Schumacker?”

“Yes, my lord,” Musdœmon replied.

The bishop rose.

“My lord president, to clear away all doubt in this matter, I beg your grace to ask the accused if he had any accomplices.”

“Accomplices!” said Musdœmon.

He seemed to reflect for a moment. In that moment the president’s face gave token of terrible anxiety.

“No, reverend bishop,” the secretary at last replied.

The president met his glance with a sigh of relief.

“No, I had no accomplices,” said Musdœmon again, with greater emphasis. “I wove the whole plot to destroy Schumacker, because of my regard for my master, who knew nothing of it.”

The eyes of the president and the prisoner met once more.

“Your Grace,” said the bishop, “must be convinced that Ordener Guldenlew cannot be guilty, as Musdœmon had no accomplices.”

“If he is not guilty, reverend bishop, why did he make confession of guilt?”

“My lord president, why did yon mountaineer persist in saying that he was Hans of Iceland at peril of his life? God alone knows what there is at the bottom of men’s hearts.”

At this juncture Ordener spoke for himself.

"Your lordships, now that the real culprit is discovered I can explain my action. Yes, I falsely accused myself to save Schumacker, the ex-chancellor, whose death would have left his daughter without a protector."

The president bit his lips.

"We demand," said the bishop, "that the innocence of our client Ordener be formally found by the court."

The president replied with an affirmative gesture, and at the request of the chief syndic, the examination of the contents of the famous casket was completed. It contained nothing save Schumacker's letters patent and titles, with a few letters from the prisoner of Munckholm to Captain Dispolsen, — letters which were bitter in tone, but in no sense criminal, and which had no terrors for anybody but Chancellor von Ahlefeld.

The judges soon withdrew, and after a brief consultation, while the sight-seers assembled on the drill-ground were awaiting with growing impatience the appearance of the condemned son of the viceroy, and the executioner was walking carelessly to and fro on the scaffold, the president, in an almost inaudible voice, read the decree which condemned Turiaf Musdæmon, and rehabilitated Ordener Guldenlew, restoring him to full possession of all his honors, titles and privileges.

XLIX.

For how much will you sell me
Your carcass, villain ?
Upon my honor, I would not give
An obolus for it.

Saint Michael to Satan : A mystery.

The remnant of the regiment of arquebusiers had returned to their former barracks, a building which stood by itself in the centre of a large square court within the walls of the fortress. When night fell they barred all the doors, as their custom was, all the men of the command being inside, with the exception of those who were doing sentry duty, and the squad on guard in front of the military prison adjoining the barracks. This prison, which was the most secure and the most carefully watched of all the prisons of Munckholm, contained the two men who were to be hanged the next morning, — Hans of Iceland and Musdœmon.

Hans of Iceland was alone in his cell. He was stretched out upon the floor, heavily ironed, with his head resting on a stone ; a feeble light reached him through a square barred opening in the thick oaken door which separated the cell from the adjoining room, where he could hear his keepers laughing and cursing to the clinking of the bottles they were emptying, and the rattle of dice on a drumhead.

The monster writhed about silently in the darkness ; folded and unfolded his arms, drew up his knees and stretched them out again, and gnawed at his fetters.

Suddenly he called ; a turnkey showed his face at the barred opening.

“ What do you want ? ” he said.

Hans sat up.

“ I am cold, comrade,” he said ; “ my stone bed is hard and damp ; give me a wisp of straw to sleep on, and a little fire to warm me.”

“ That is no more than right,” rejoined the turnkey, — “ to give a poor devil who is going to be hanged a little comfort, even if he is the devil from Iceland. I will bring you what you want. Have you any money ? ”

“ No,” the outlaw replied.

“ What ! you, the most notorious robber in Norway, have n’t a few paltry gold ducats in your wallet ? ”

“ No.”

“ Nor a royal crown or two ? ”

“ No, I tell you ! ”

“ Not even a few wretched ascalins ? ”

“ No, no ! nothing ; not enough to buy the skin of a rat or a man’s soul ! ”

The turnkey shook his head.

“ That makes a difference. You do wrong to complain ; your cell is n’t so cold as the one you will sleep in to-morrow, — without noticing how hard the bed is, either, I promise you.”

With that he withdrew, accompanied by a bitter curse from the monster, who continued to move about in his chains ; now and then there was a

slight noise, as if the links were being slowly worn through by violent and repeated twitching.

The oaken door opened, and a tall man, dressed in red serge, with a dark lantern in his hand, entered the cell, accompanied by the turnkey who had denied the prisoner's request. Hans at once became perfectly still.

"Hans of Iceland," said the man in red, "I am Nychol Orugix, executioner of Drontheimhus. To-morrow, at daybreak, I am to have the honor of hanging your Excellency by the neck on a beautiful new gallows on the public square of Drontheim."

"Are you quite sure, really, that you will hang me?" retorted the outlaw.

The hangman began to laugh.

"I wish you were as sure of going straight up to heaven by Jacob's ladder, as you are of mounting the scaffold to-morrow by Nychol Orugix's ladder."

"Do you mean it?" said Hans, with a wicked leer.

"I tell you again, Herr Outlaw, I am the executioner of the province."

"If I were not myself, I would like to be you."

"I cannot say as much," returned the hangman.

"Ah! my friend, you are right," he continued, rubbing his hands with an absurd air of flattered vanity, "ours is indeed a noble profession. My hand knows the weight of a man's head."

"Did you ever drink blood?"

"No; but I have often put men to the question."

"Did you ever feed on the entrails of a living child?"

"No; but I have made men's bones crack between

the planks of an iron chevalet; I have torn off limbs on the spokes of a wheel; I have broken steel saws upon skulls from which I was removing the scalp; I have torn the quivering flesh with red-hot tongs; I have burned the blood in half-opened veins by pouring in a stream of molten lead and boiling oil."

"Yes, you do have some pleasure," said the outlaw, pensively.

"In short," continued Nychol, "although you are Hans of Iceland, I believe that more souls have flown away through my hands than through yours, without counting the one which will leave your body to-morrow."

"Assuming that I have one. Pray, do you imagine, hangman of Drontheimhus, that you can release the spirit of Ingolphus from the body of Hans of Iceland without his carrying off yours?"

Nychol's reply began with a roar of laughter.

"Ah! we shall see to-morrow about that."

"We shall see," the outlaw repeated.

"Well," said Nychol, "I did n't come here to talk about your spirit, but about your body. Hark ye! Your body belongs of right to me after death, but the law allows you to sell it to me. How much do you want for it?"

"What do I want for my corpse?"

"Yes, and have some conscience about it."

Hans turned to the turnkey: —

"Say, comrade, for how much will you sell me a bundle of straw and a little fire?"

"Two golden ducats," said the turnkey, after a moment's reflection.

"Very well," said the outlaw to Orugix, "you shall give me two golden ducats for my body."

"Two golden ducats!" cried the hangman. "That is horribly dear. Two golden ducats for a wretched corpse. No, indeed! I won't give that price."

"Then you shall not have it," retorted the monster, coolly.

"You will be thrown into the sewer, instead of adorning the royal museum at Copenhagen, or the cabinet of curiosities at Bergen."

"What does it matter to me?"

"Long after your death, people will come in crowds to examine your skeleton, and will say: '*This is the skeleton of the famous Hans of Iceland!*' Your bones will be carefully polished and fastened together with copper wire; you will be placed in a great glass case, from which the dust will be removed every day. Instead of such honors, think of the fate that awaits you if you refuse to sell me your corpse; you will be left to rot on some dung-heap, where snakes and vultures will fight for your flesh."

"Oh, well! in that case I shall resemble living men, who are gnawed by the little villains and swallowed whole by the big ones."

"Two golden ducats!" said the hangman, between his teeth, "what an absurd demand! If you don't come down on your price, my dear Hans of Iceland, we cannot make a bargain."

"This is the first and probably the last sale I shall make in my life, and I propose to strike a good bargain."

"Remember that I can make you repent your obstinacy. To-morrow you will be in my power."

"Do you think so?"

The significant expression with which these words were uttered escaped the hangman's notice.

"Yes, and there is a certain way of tying the slip-knot — whereas if you will be reasonable, I will hang you more comfortably."

"It makes little difference to me what you do to my neck to-morrow," said the monster, with a grin.

"Come, could n't you get along with two royal crowns? What would you do with them?"

"Apply to your comrade here," said the brigand, pointing to the turnkey; "he demands two golden ducats for a little straw and fire."

"Upon my word!" said the hangman, apostrophizing the turnkey with some temper. "By St. Joseph's saw! it is disgusting to make him pay for a fire and a little wretched straw with their weight in gold. Two ducats!"

"It's very good of me not to ask four," retorted the turnkey, sourly. "You're as much of an Arab as the figure 2, Master Nychol, to refuse the poor devil two ducats for his body, which you can sell for twenty to some professor or doctor."

"I never paid more than fifteen ascalins for a body," said the hangman.

"That may be true," said the turnkey; "that's enough, too, for the corpse of a paltry thief, or a wretched Jew; but every one knows that you can get whatever you want for Hans of Iceland."

Hans shook his head.

"What business is it of yours?" said Orugix, roughly. "Do I interfere with your pilfering? Do I prate about the clothing and jewels you steal from your prisoners, the dirty water you put in their soup, or the torture you subject them to, to extort money from them? No, I won't give two ducats."

"No straw and no fire for less than two ducats," said the implacable turnkey.

"No corpse for less than two ducats," echoed the inflexible outlaw.

After a moment's pause, the hangman stamped angrily on the floor.

"My time is short. I have business elsewhere."

He took a leather bag from his bosom, and opened it slowly and regretfully.

"Here are your two ducats, you cursed demon. Satan would never give for your soul what I am giving for your body."

The outlaw took the two pieces of money. Instantly the turnkey put out his hand to take them from him.

"One moment, comrade; first bring me what I want."

The turnkey went out, and returned a moment later with a bunch of fresh straw, and a chafing-dish filled with live coals, which he placed by the condemned man's side.

"That's right," said the outlaw, handing him the two ducats. "I will warm myself to-night. One other word," he added, with a sinister inflection in his voice, — "doesn't this prison adjoin the barracks of the arquebusiers?"

"Yes, it does," the turnkey replied.

"How is the wind?"

"From the east, I think."

"Very good."

"What are you coming at, comrade?" queried the turnkey.

"Oh! nothing."

"Farewell, comrade, until to-morrow morning, bright and early."

"Yes, until to-morrow," the brigand repeated.

The noise made by the heavy door as it closed upon him prevented the hangman and his companion from hearing the savage, sneering laugh which accompanied his words.

L.

Did you hope to end your days with another crime? — ALEX. SOUMET.

LET us now cast a glance into the other dungeon of the military prison adjoining the barracks, which was occupied by an old acquaintance, Turiaf Musdoemon.

The reader may perhaps have wondered to hear the crafty and cowardly Musdoemon so candidly unfold the secret of his crime to the tribunal which passed judgment upon him, and generously conceal the part which his ungrateful patron, Chancellor von Ahlefeld, had taken in it. But let there be no mistake; Musdoemon's nature had not changed. Indeed, this display of generous good faith was perhaps the most striking example of consummate villany in his career. When his whole infernal plot was laid bare so unexpectedly and with unanswerable proofs, he was for an instant dazed with terror. When he recovered from the first shock, he was keen-sighted enough to see that, in view of the utter impossibility of accomplishing the ruin of his intended victims, his only thought must be to save himself. Two possible courses were open to him: he could unload everything upon the Count von Ahlefeld, who abandoned him so basely, or himself assume the

whole responsibility for the crime of which he and the count were equally guilty. Any ordinary villain would have decided at once upon the first course, but Musdœmon chose the second. The chancellor was the chancellor, and there was nothing to implicate him directly among the papers which bore with such crushing weight upon his confidential secretary. Furthermore he had exchanged sundry significant glances with Musdœmon, and nothing more was necessary to induce the latter to allow himself to be condemned ; for he was certain that Von Ahlefeld would help him to escape, not so much from gratitude for his past services as because of his probable need of his services in future.

And so he was pacing up and down in his cell, which was dimly lighted by a sepulchral lamp, not doubting that the door would be opened to him in the course of the night. He examined with some interest the interior of the old stone dungeon, built by bygone kings whose names history has almost forgotten, and was astonished to find that it had a wooden floor which gave forth a hollow sound beneath his footsteps, as if it covered an excavation in the earth. He noticed, too, a large iron ring fastened in the keystone of the arched Gothic ceiling, with a fragment of rope hanging to it.

Meanwhile time was flying, and he listened impatiently to the tower clock as it slowly struck the hours one after another, clanging mournfully in the silence and darkness.

At last he heard steps outside the door of his cell ; his heart beat high with hope. The key groaned in

the huge lock, the chains fell noisily to the floor; and when the door was opened his face fairly beamed with joy.

It was the same scarlet-robed individual whom we saw in Hans of Iceland's cell. He carried a coil of hempen rope under his arm, and was attended by four soldiers in black clothes, armed with swords and halberds.

Musdœmon was still dressed in his magisterial gown and wig. The costume seemed to produce a deep impression upon the man in scarlet, and he bowed low as if he were accustomed to salute it respectfully.

"My lord," he said to the prisoner with some hesitation, "is it your Courtesy that we have business with?"

"Yes, yes!" Musdœmon replied hastily, confirmed in his hope of escape by this polite beginning, and not noticing the sanguinary color of the speaker's clothing.

"Your name," said the scarlet man, with his eyes fixed upon a document he had unfolded, "is Turiaf Musdœmon?"

"Precisely. You come from the grand chancellor, do you not, my friends?"

"Yes, your Courtesy."

"Do not forget, when you have accomplished your mission, to convey my gratitude to his Grace."

The red man gazed at him in utter amazement.

"Your — gratitude!"

"Yes, of course, my friend; for it will probably be impossible for me to express my feelings to him in person."

"It's quite likely," said the man, ironically.

"And you must agree," continued Musdæmon, "that I ought not to seem ungrateful for such a service?"

"By the cross of the penitent thief!" cried the other, with a grim smile, "one would think, to hear you, that the chancellor was doing something very different for your Courtesy."

"Of course, at this moment he is doing me nothing more than strict justice."

"Strict!—you may well say so; but you agree that it is justice. That's the first confession of that sort I've heard in the twenty-six years I have plied my trade. Come, my lord, we are wasting time in words; are you ready?"

"Indeed I am!" said Musdæmon, joyously, moving toward the door.

"Wait a moment, wait!" cried the red man, stooping to lay his coil of rope on the floor.

Musdæmon stopped. "Why all that rope, pray?"

"Your Courtesy has reason to ask me that question; I have in fact much more than I need; but at the beginning of the trial I thought I was to have many more condemned men."

As he spoke he was uncoiling the rope.

"Come, let us make haste," said Musdæmon.

"Your Courtesy is in a great hurry! Have you no requests to make?"

"No other than the one I have already made,—to thank his Grace for me. For God's sake, hurry!" he added. "I am impatient to be away from here. Have we far to go?"

"Far to go!" echoed the man in scarlet, standing erect, and measuring off several arm's-lengths of the rope. "The distance you have still to go will not tire your Courtesy overmuch; for we propose to do the whole thing without leaving the cell."

Musdœmon started back.

"What do you mean?"

"What do you mean yourself?" demanded the other.

"Oh, God!" ejaculated Musdœmon, and the color fled from his cheeks as if he had seen a ghost; "who are you?"

"I am the executioner."

The miserable wretch trembled like a dry leaf shaken by the wind.

"Did n't you come to help me escape?" he muttered almost inaudibly.

The hangman roared with laughter.

"Yes, indeed! to help you escape into the land of ghosts, where they will never recapture you, I dare swear."

Musdœmon threw himself face downward on the floor.

"Mercy! have pity on me! Mercy!"

"Upon my word!" said the hangman, coldly, "I never had such a request made of me before. Do you take me for the king?"

The unhappy man dragged himself along on his knees, trailing his gown in the dust, striking the floor with his face, so radiant but a moment before, and kissed the hangman's feet, moaning and sobbing piteously.

"Hold your peace!" growled Orugix. "Never before did I see the black robe humble itself to my red jacket."

He pushed the suppliant away with his foot.

"Pray to God and the saints, comrade; they will listen to you better than I."

Musdcemon remained on his knees, with his face hidden in his hands, and weeping bitterly. Meanwhile the hangman, raising himself on tiptoe, passed the rope through the ring in the ceiling; he let it hang down to the floor, and made a slip-knot in the end.

"I am ready," he said to the condemned man, when these ominous preparations were concluded; "have you done with life?"

"No," said Musdcemon, rising; "no, it cannot be! You are acting under some horrible misapprehension. Chancellor von Ahlefeld is not so infamous — I am too necessary to him. It is not possible that you were sent to me. Let me fly; do not venture to incur the wrath of the chancellor."

"Did n't you tell us," the hangman retorted, "that you are Turiaf Musdcemon?"

The prisoner was silent for a moment.

"No," he exclaimed suddenly, "no, my name is not Musdcemon; my name is Turiaf Orugix."

"Orugix!" cried the hangman. "Orugix!"

He hastily tore off the wig which hid the condemned man's face, and exclaimed with a stupefied stare: —

"My brother!"

"Your brother!" echoed the condemned man, with

amazement mingled with shame and joy ; “ can it be that you are — ”

“ Nychol Orugix, executioner of Drontheimhus, at your service, Brother Turiaf.”

The prisoner threw himself on Nychol's neck, calling him his brother, his dear brother. This exhibition of brotherly affection would not have stirred the heart of any one who happened to witness it. Turiaf lavished endearing words upon Nychol with an affected, frightened smile, and Nychol responded with an embarrassed scowl. It reminded one of a tiger fawning upon an elephant just when the monster's ponderous foot is pressing upon his panting flank.

“ What happiness, Brother Nychol ! I am very glad to see you again.”

“ I am very sorry for you, Brother Turiaf.”

The condemned man pretended not to hear, and continued in a trembling voice : —

“ You have a wife and children, no doubt ? You will take me to see my good sister-in-law, and kiss my charming nephews.”

“ The devil's sign of the cross ! ” muttered the hangman.

“ I mean to be a second father to them. Listen, brother ; I am powerful and influential — ”

“ I know that you were so ! ” the brother replied in a sinister tone. “ You had best now think only of him whose influence with the saints you have succeeded in procuring, no doubt.”

Every vestige of hope vanished from the condemned man's face.

“ Oh, God ! Nychol, what does this mean ? My life is safe, of course, now that I have found you. Remember that the same womb bore us, that we were fed at the same breast, that we played together in our childhood, — remember, Nychol, that you are my brother ! ”

“ You never remembered it until now,” replied the unsympathetic Nychol.

“ No ! I cannot die by my brother’s hand.”

“ It is your own fault, Turiaf. You spoiled my career ; you prevented my becoming royal executioner of Copenhagen ; you sent me into this wretched country to be a mere provincial hangman. If you had not shown yourself a bad brother by acting thus, you would not have to complain of what disturbs you so to-day. I should not be in Drontheim, and some other would attend to your affair. We have said enough, — brother, you must die.”

Death is a hideous thing to the sinner, for the same reasons which make it beautiful to the upright man ; both are to lay aside all their human qualities, but the just man is freed from his body as from a prison, while the sinner is torn from it as from a fortress. At the last moment hell is revealed to the perverse soul which has dreamed that death means oblivion. When it knocks anxiously at death’s dark portal, it finds that all is not an empty void on the other side.

The guilty wretch writhed on the floor, wringing his hands and tearing his hair, with moans more heart-rending than the endless lamentations of the damned.

“O merciful God ! O blessed angels in heaven, if you exist, have pity on me ! Nychol, dear Nychol, in the name of our common mother, let me live !”

The hangman held out his parchment.

“I cannot ; the order is precise.”

“The order does n’t concern me,” stammered the prisoner, in desperation ; “it concerns a certain Musdœmon, and I am Turiaf Orugix.”

“You are joking,” said Nychol, with a shrug. “I know well enough that you’re the man. Besides,” he added harshly, “yesterday you would not have been Turiaf Orugix to your brother, and so to-day you are still Turiaf Musdœmon to him.”

“Brother, brother !” cried the wretched creature ; “oh ! wait until to-morrow ! It is n’t possible that the grand chancellor ordered me to be put to death. It’s a frightful misunderstanding. Count von Ahlefeld is very fond of me. Life ! spare my life, Nychol, I conjure you ! I shall soon be restored to favor, and I will repay all the services —”

“You can do me only one service, Turiaf,” interposed Nychol. “I have been cheated out of the two executions from which I expected most, — ex-Chancellor Schumacker’s and the viceroy’s son’s. I am always unlucky. Only you and Hans of Iceland are left now. Your execution, being done secretly and at night, will bring me twelve golden ducats. So let me go on with it in peace ; that’s the only service I expect from you.”

“Oh, God !” groaned the condemned man.

“That is the first and only service you can do me ; but in return I promise that you shall not suffer. I

will hang you like a brother. Come, resign yourself to the inevitable."

Musdœmon rose; his nostrils were inflated with anger, his pale lips trembled, his teeth chattered, and he was foaming at the mouth in his despair.

"Satan! I would have saved this Von Ahlefeld! I would have embraced my brother! and they insist upon murdering me! and I must die to-night, in a dark dungeon! and the world cannot hear my curses; my voice cannot thunder from one end of the kingdom to the other, nor my hand tear aside the veil from all their crimes! I have defiled and degraded my whole life to come at last to such an end as this! Miserable wretch!" he shrieked at his brother, "do you mean to commit fratricide?"

"I am the hangman," returned Nychol, phlegmatically.

"No!" yelled Musdœmon. He threw himself upon his brother, his eyes flashing fire and shedding tears of frenzy, like a wild bull at bay. "No, I will not die so! I will not have it said that I lived the life of a death-dealing serpent, only to die the death of a wretched snake which one crushes under his heel! I will give up my life with my last bite,—but it shall be a deadly one."

As he spoke he threw his arms about the hangman's body in a desperate attempt to squeeze the life out of the man whom he had but just embraced as a brother. The fawning, wheedling Musdœmon exhibited himself at that moment as he really was. Despair stirred his soul to the very dregs, and after crawling on the ground like the tiger, he sprang upon

his prey like him. It would have been hard to say which was the more frightful of the two brothers to look at, as they struggled together, one with the stupid ferocity of a wild beast, the other with the cunning fury of a demon.

But the four halberdiers, who had kept in the background up to that time, did not remain inactive. They ran to the hangman's assistance, and soon Musdæmon, who had no strength beyond that with which his rage endowed him, was compelled to relax his hold. He hurled himself against the wall, shrieking unintelligibly, and tearing his nails upon the stone.

"To die! demons of hell! to die! and my shrieks cannot penetrate these walls, nor my arms overturn them!"

They seized him, and he made no resistance. His fruitless struggle had exhausted him. They removed his gown to bind him, and, as they did so, a sealed packet fell to the floor.

"What's that?" said Nychol.

The culprit's haggard eyes gleamed with the hope of an infernal revenge.

"How did I happen to forget that?" he muttered. "Hark ye, Brother Nychol," he added, almost in a friendly tone, "these papers belong to the grand chancellor. Promise to hand them to him, and you may do what you please with me."

"As you are reasonable now, I promise to gratify your last request, although you have been acting in a very unbrotherly way. These papers shall be handed to the chancellor, my word for it."

"Ask leave to hand them to him yourself," continued Musdœmon, smiling upon his brother, whose experience of smiles was very limited. "The pleasure his Grace will take in having them may be of advantage to you."

"Do you mean it, brother?" said Nychol. "Thanks. Perhaps it may mean a commission as royal executioner, eh? Well, let us part good friends. I forgive you the scratches you gave me with your nails; do you forgive me the rope collar you are soon to receive from me."

"The chancellor promised me a collar of another kind," said Musdœmon.

The halberdiers carried him, securely bound, to the centre of the dungeon, and the hangman adjusted the deadly noose around his neck.

"Are you ready, Turiaf?"

"One moment! one moment!" said the doomed man, whose craven fit had returned upon him. "In pity's name, brother, do not tighten the rope till I give the word."

"I shall not need to tighten the rope," was the reply.

A moment later he repeated the question:

"Are you ready?"

"One moment more! Alas! must I really die?"

"Turiaf, I can wait no longer," said Nychol, motioning to the halberdiers to stand aside.

"One word more, brother! Don't forget to hand the package to Count von Ahlefeld."

"Never fear!" his brother replied. "Once more, are you ready?"

The poor creature opened his mouth, perhaps to beg for another second of life, but the impatient hangman stooped, and pressed a copper button in the floor.

The floor at once opened under the victim's feet, the miserable wretch disappeared through a square trap-door, and the rope suddenly tightened with violent vibrations, caused in part by the dying man's last convulsions. Nothing could be seen save the rope quivering in the dark opening, whence a draught of fresh air came rushing out, and a noise as of running water.

Even the halberdiers recoiled in horror. Orugix approached the trap, seized the rope which was still vibrating, and stepped out upon the victim's shoulders. The rope stretched till it would stretch no more, and ceased to quiver. A choking sound issued from the opening.

"It is well," said Nychol, stepping back into the cell. Farewell, brother."

He drew a cutlass from his belt.

"Go and feed the fish in the fiord ; let water destroy your body, while hell-fire consumes your soul !"

With that he cut the tightly drawn rope. The part which remained fast to the ring snapped back against the ceiling, and they heard the splash of the body in the dark stream below, which bore it away underground to the deep waters of the fiord.

The hangman closed the trap. When he stood erect again, he saw that the cell was full of smoke.

"What does this mean?" he asked the halberdiers. "Where does this smoke come from?"

They knew no more than he. They opened the door of the cell, and found the corridors also entirely filled with a dense, nauseating smoke. Through a secret passage they made their way, much alarmed, into the square courtyard, where a fearful spectacle greeted their eyes.

The military prison and the barracks of the arquebusiers were all ablaze, and the fire was constantly increasing in intensity because of the high wind that was blowing from the east. The eddying flames circled around the massive walls, crowned the glowing roof, and burst from the blackened windows like fiery tongues from the mouths of hell; and the black towers of Munckholm gleamed red one moment in the awful glare, and the next vanished from sight in dense clouds of smoke.

A frightened turnkey told them in a few words that the fire had broken out in Hans of Iceland's cell, while his keepers were asleep, they having been so imprudent as to supply him with straw and fire.

"I am terribly unlucky," cried Orugix; "now Hans of Iceland has escaped me, no doubt. The villain must have been burned up; and I shall not have even his body, for which I paid two ducats!"

Meanwhile the ill-fated arquebusiers, rudely awakened from their sleep to find death at their pillows, rushed in a body to the main door, which was unfortunately barricaded. Their shouts of distress and agony could be heard outside; and the helpless onlookers could see them wringing their hands at the windows, whence some of them leaped down upon the flags of the courtyard, avoiding death in

one form by seeking it in another. The triumphant flame enveloped the whole structure before the rest of the garrison had time to reach the spot. It was impossible to aid them in any way. Fortunately the building stood by itself. The main door was broken in with axes, but it was too late ; for just as it gave way the whole charred framework of the barrack roof fell in with a fearful crash upon the unfortunate soldiers, carrying with it in its fall the false roof and the burning floors. The whole structure disappeared in a vortex of blazing dust and red-hot smoke, with a hollow roar which drowned the last expiring shrieks of the victims.

The next morning nothing was left in the square courtyard save four high, blackened walls still burning hot, surrounding a horrible heap of smoking ruins which continued to feed upon one another, like wild beasts in a circus. When the wreck had cooled off somewhat, they began to search among the débris. Under a heap of stones, timbers, and iron-work twisted by the heat, lay a mass of whitened bones and disfigured corpses ; these, with some thirty soldiers, for the most part crippled in some way, were all that remained of the fine Munckholm regiment.

When, upon searching the ruins of the prison, they reached Hans of Iceland's cell, they found the remains of a human body lying upon a pile of broken fetters, near an iron chafing-dish. It was remarked that, although there was but one body, there were two skulls among the ashes.

LI.

Saladin. Bravo, Ibrahim! thou art indeed a welcome messenger; I thank thee for thy good news.

The Mameluke. Oh! indeed! and is that all?

Saladin. What do you expect?

The Mameluke. Is there nothing more for the welcome messenger? — LESSING: *Nathan der Weise.*

WITH pale face and dejected mien, Count von Ahlefeld was striding up and down his apartment, crushing in his hands a package of letters which he had just run through, and stamping heavily upon the marble tiles and the gold-fringed rug.

At the farther end of the room stood Nychol Orugix in a respectful and humbly expectant attitude, clad in his infamous scarlet jacket, and carrying his felt hat in his hand.

“You have done me a service, Musdæmon,” muttered the chancellor between his clenched teeth.

The hangman looked timidly up at him.

“Is your Grace satisfied?”

“What do you want?” said the chancellor, turning abruptly around.

The hangman, proud to have won a look from the great man, smiled with hope.

“What do I want, your Grace? The position of executioner at Copenhagen, if your Grace will deign to bestow that signal favor upon me in return for the good news I bring.”

The chancellor called the two halberdiers who were on guard at the door.

“Seize this varlet,” he said; “he has the insolence to defy me.”

As they dragged the terrified and confounded Nychol away, he tried to appeal to the chancellor.

“My lord —” he began.

“You are no longer executioner of Drontheimhus! I cancel your appointment!” said Von Ahlefeld, slamming the door behind him.

The chancellor seized the letters again, and read and re-read them in a frenzy of rage, — drunken, so to speak, with his own dishonor; for the letters were the countess’s former correspondence with Musdœmon. They were in Elphega’s handwriting. He read therein that Ulrica was not his daughter, and that the bitterly lamented Frederic was perhaps not his son. The wretched man was punished by the same pride which caused all his crimes. Not only had he seen his vengeance escape him; that was a small matter compared with the fading away of all his ambitious dreams; his past was stained with crime, and his future a blank. He undertook to ruin his enemies; he had succeeded only in ruining his own influence, destroying his confidential adviser, and losing his rights as husband and father.

He determined to see once more the wretched woman who had betrayed him. He walked rapidly through the great rooms, shaking the letters in his hands, as if they were so many thunderbolts. He rushed into Elphega’s apartment like a madman.

His guilty spouse had but just learned, without warning, from Colonel Voethaün, of the awful death of her son Frederic. The poor mother was mad.

CONCLUSION.

What I said in joke, you took seriously. — *Spanish Romances : King Alphonzo to Bernard.*

FOR a fortnight the events we have described had been the engrossing subjects of conversation in Drontheim and throughout the province, viewed in various lights according to the different points of view. The populace of the city, who had waited in vain for the spectacle of seven successive executions, were beginning to despair ; the half-blind old women were still telling how they had seen Hans of Iceland, in the night of the dreadful fire at the barracks, fly away in a tongue of flame, laughing at the fire, and pushing the burning roof in upon the arquebusiers with his foot, — when, after an absence which seemed long indeed to Ethel, Ordener appeared in the donjon of the Lion of Schleswig, accompanied by General Levin von Knud, and Athanasius Munder, the chaplain.

Schumacker was walking in the garden at the time, leaning on his daughter's arm. The young husband and wife found it hard to refrain from rushing into each other's arms, but they were fain to content themselves with an eloquent glance. Schumacker grasped Ordener's hand with great warmth, and bowed cordially to the two strangers.

“ Young man,” he said, “ may Heaven bless your return ! ”

"I am here, my lord," Ordener rejoined. "I have been to see my father at Bergen, and I return to embrace my father at Drontheim."

"What do you mean?" asked the old man, in amazement.

"That you must give me your daughter," my lord."

"My daughter!" cried the old man, turning to the blushing, trembling Ethel.

"Yes, my lord, I love your daughter; I have consecrated my life to her; she is mine."

A cloud passed over Schumacker's face.

"You are a high-souled, noble youth," he said. "Although your father has treated me very badly, I freely forgive him on your account, and I would welcome the alliance with all my heart. But there is an obstacle."

"What obstacle, my lord?" asked Ordener, almost anxiously.

"You love my daughter; but are you sure that she loves you?"

The lovers gazed at each other in blank surprise.

"I am very sorry for it," the old man continued; "for I love you dearly, and I would have been glad to call you my son. But my daughter will not listen to you. She told me of her aversion for you only a short time ago. Since your departure she has held her peace whenever I have spoken of you, and has seemed to avoid thinking of you, as if it were a burden to her. So do you abandon the idea, Ordener. One can cure one's self of loving as well as of hating."

“My lord —” Ordener began, perfectly aghast.

“Father!” exclaimed Ethel, clasping her hands.

“Have no fear, my child,” the old man interrupted her; “the thought of this marriage is pleasing to me, but not to you. I have no wish to force your inclination, Ethel. I have changed much in two weeks, you see. I will respect your dislike for Ordener. You are free.”

Athanasius Munder smiled.

“No, she’s not,” he said.

“You are mistaken, my noble father,” added Ethel, taking courage. “I do not hate Ordener.”

“What!” cried her father.

“I am —” she began; but she got no farther.

Ordener was on his knees at the old man’s feet.

“She is my wife, father! Forgive me, as my other father has done already, and give your children your blessing.”

It was Schumacker’s turn to be astonished; but he none the less gave his blessing to the young couple kneeling before him.

“I have done so much cursing in my life,” he said, “that now I seize every opportunity to bestow my blessing without investigation. But pray explain —”

Everything was explained to him, and he wept with gratitude and love.

“I thought I knew everything, for I am an old man; but I did not understand a young girl’s heart!”

“And so I am really Ordener Guldenlew’s wife!” said Ethel, with childish glee.

“Ordener Guldenlew,” said Schumacker, “you are

a better man than I ; for in my prosperous days I certainly would not have descended from my lofty station to form an alliance with the dowerless, out-cast daughter of a prisoner of state."

The general placed a roll of parchments in the old man's hand.

"Herr Count, do not speak so," he said. "Here are your patents of nobility which the king sent to you by Dispolсен. To them his Majesty adds pardon and freedom. Those are the dowry of the Countess Danneskiold, your daughter."

"Pardon ! freedom !" exclaimed Ethel, beside herself with joy.

"Countess Danneskiold !" said her father.

"Yes, count," the general continued, "you are restored to your former rank, and all your property is restored to you."

"To whom do I owe all this ?" asked the overjoyed Schumacker.

"To General Levin von Knud," Ordener replied.

"Levin von Knud ! What did I tell you, Herr Governor ? Levin von Knud is the best of men. But why did he not come himself to tell me of my good fortune ? Where is he ?"

"He is here," said Ordener, pointing to the general, who was smiling and weeping simultaneously.

The meeting between the two old comrades was touching in the extreme. The door of Schumacker's heart was thrown open at last. His acquaintance with Hans of Iceland made him cease to hate his fellow-men, — his acquaintance with Ordener and Levin led him to love them.

The gloomy wedding in the dungeon was soon followed by a lovely marriage festival, better befitting the union of two loving young hearts. Life began to smile upon the young husband and wife, who had smiled when death stared them in the face. The Count von Ahlefeld knew that they were happy, — that was his bitterest punishment.

Athanasius Munder also had cause for rejoicing. He obtained the pardon of his twelve condemned men, and Ordener added that of his former companions in misfortune, Kennybol, Jonas, and Norbith, who returned to their homes free and rejoicing, to announce to the pacified miners that the king had released them from the obnoxious guardianship.

Schumacker did not long survive to enjoy life with Ethel and Ordener; freedom and happiness stirred his soul too deeply, and it took flight to enjoy freedom and happiness of a different nature in another world. He died in the same year, 1699, and his death came as a lesson to his children that there is no perfect happiness on earth. He was buried in the church of Veer, an estate owned by his son-in-law in Jutland, and the tomb made faithful record of all the titles of which his imprisonment had despoiled him. From the union of Ordener and Ethel the family of the Counts of Danneskiold descends.

THE END.

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